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WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

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Short Stories
of To-day and Yesterday

MORLEY ROBERTS

SHORT STORIES *of*
TO-DAY & YESTERDAY

First Volumes

ARNOLD BENNETT
G. K. CHESTERTON
BARRY PAIN
W. W. JACOBS
MORLEY ROBERTS
GEORGE GISSING
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Short Stories
of To-day and Yesterday

MORLEY ROBERTS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IT would not be easy to find a life more romantic or full of incident than that of Mr Morley Roberts. Born in London in 1857, he was educated at Bedford School and Owens College, Manchester. At the age of nineteen he went to Australia. Since then he has travelled all over the globe from Australia to America, and from Canada to South Africa and the islands of the South Seas. He knows Corsica and the Canaries as well as Samoa and the Sandwich Islands, Texas and British Columbia as well as Manitoba. The mere catalogue of places covered by his journeyings reads like a Homeric roll.

His labours have been equally diversified, for he has worked on railroads, toiled with sheep and cattle in the bush, laboured in sawmills, and gone to sea before the mast. In addition he has served in the India Office and the War Office.

When a man with such a wealth of experience sits down to write it is clear that matter will not be lacking. It only remains to be seen whether he will have the power to rise to the full height of his opportunity. Mr Morley Roberts does not disappoint us. Tales of the sea, social dramas, and love stories; stories of California, Texas, British Columbia, and Africa—they, and many others, are all to be found coming from the same sure hand which writes from full knowledge of

the subject. And he has created some inimitable characters. Who that has ever met him can forget Spink, the "one and only Spink" of Gloucester, with his unfortunate gift for fighting, or the Reverend Thomas Ruddle, with the marvellous wealth of vocabulary which he recovered in a manner so astonishing?

In addition to novels and short stories Mr Roberts has written an illuminating study of his great friend W. H. Hudson.

The present volume, small though it is in comparison with the considerable bulk of Mr Roberts' achievement, reflects very fairly its diversity, and gives a good idea of his marvellous range.

F. H. P.

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THE OLD ANCIENT SHIP

It was a long time before old Tom Gale opened his mouth to say much more than "good morning, sir," or "'tis a fine day," or "there's dirty weather coming," or the like. But when he understood I had the freedom of the seas he began to speak of the goodly times of his youth. He was eighty and still strong though much bent, and he had a clean clear eye, a white beard, and a ruddy skin. By a long path he came to the time when he was twenty and at last told me his strange tale of old Captain Blood.

"When I first set eyes on him he was no more than a beachcomber in a far island in the Pacific that I disremember the name of. I was in the *Good Hope* then with a Captain Saul commanding her, and Mr Christian was the mate and the second greaser was a young spark called Wilding, a good enough sailorman. I mind we came to an island full of brown people that was pleasing to look upon. And we was bound nor'ard, or so we understood. And old Blood came aboard of us, a strong old man like me as I am now, though taller and bigger, with a great white beard all the way to his breastbone. And he begged for a passage to the islands we were bound for. Young Mr Wilding, looking him over, thought much of

him and spoke to Captain Saul, who came out and talked with this queer big old man who had come aboard out of these islands like a ghost out of the past, so to speak. And the skipper said:

" ' Yes, yes. Why not, why not, Mr Wilding? Let him berth with the men! '

" But he never asked Blood why he wanted a passage, nor what he had been up to in the islands, though we heard the natives thought him half a god, at least. We gave the old chap Ned White's bunk, for Ned had gone to Davy Jones' locker and there was an empty place among us in the fo'c'sle. And the old man muttered (or so a boy among us let on):

" ' Aye, a dead man's bunk is good enough for me. I've slept alongside many dead men in the old, old days.'

" There were some of us who said openly that he was a strange wicked-looking devil and they wondered how it was that old Captain Saul and Mr Christian, good sober men and godly, had let him come aboard. But it wasn't my thought that he was a bad man by nature, though strange and close. And I, being young and having no forecast in my mind of such a white beard as now wags on my old chin, had a great wonder of him, for his beard was as white as the driven snow and he could have wrapped it about his throat if he'd needed a comforter. As some of us let on, it would have been a good thing, and far better than a stocking round his neck, beating down

Channel in cold weather. I liked him mightily, though being young I took a back seat, but my particular mate didn't cotton to him overmuch and I mind he said:

" ' He's been a bad man and that white beard of his might have streaks of blood in it, though he's as good a seaman as ever I see.'

" The old chap allowed he knew the two ends and the bight of the bloody world. There wasn't a coast of the round earth he hadn't cursed or drunk in, and he let on after getting rid of his closeness that what he knew of the ways of men couldn't be stowed in a big ship. We got him talking and not one of us could set him down or dare to know half as much. For old Blood, though so ancient, had shoulders on him like the spread of the mainyard, and fine white teeth that he showed at times if you angered him, and if you wrought him up he looked like a man that had had authority. Some of us called him ' Captain ' right off, and no doubt there was power in him. We said among ourselves, when he was out on deck or aft with the skipper, that he had doubtless been a pirate or a black-birder at the least of it. There was that about him which smacked of great things remembered. And he had queer ways, for when we asked how old he was he swore he was forty and that he'd been born with a white beard. And when one of our coves nipped in with an unlikely horrid tale of a kid born with fierce teeth that snatched beef from the dish when he was three days born, old

Blood swore it was likely himself. White as he was he was very nimble and had a quick eye, and in thoughts as active as a monkey. He allowed he liked the look of the *Good Hope*, for she was a very old ancient ship built in the days of great ships made of real good stuff, salted in their beams to make them last for ever, and built of no steamed timber but with good knees of natural growed oak and planking seasoned slow in long, long years. She had mighty fine work on her and a very ancient old stern that was grandly carved, and she was bluff-bowed and tumbled well home. Moreover, she had a great sheer and her chains were big broad plankings which gave her a fine old-fashioned look and a great spread to her rigging clear of the top-sides. Why, with a little squeezing you could have walked along those chains two abreast. And once I remember I sat there all quiet with a brown girl and kissed her and nobody the wiser. It was a fine way to rig a ship and very sweet to look at, though now it seems unnatural when 'tis right to have the rigging eyes made fast to the timber heads or to the lower shelf-pieces by the covering board. And her yards had a mighty spread on them, single topsails, of course, in those days. And old Blood let on to us that when he saw her come to an anchor off of his island, he said:

"'That's the ship for me to go north in. At my age I'll ship in no new-fangled craft.'

"And one of the crowd ups and says:

" ' Come, you old pirate, what was the last ship you did awful deeds in? '

" And old Bill looked at him till the blighter fair quailed, and then he said, half to himself and half to us:

" ' I could tell tales! Ah, that could I! '

" And he talked to himself, muttering maybe about the deeds of his youth before his hair was white. By now we were coming up to those islands we were bound for. So some of us began to talk of the fine warm beaches and the bright brown maids and the sweetness of growing things and the joys of life. And the old man sat and listened and nodded his head. But at last it seemed to me that he fell day by day into a sort of a kind of terror and got a shake on him. And then he up and said to us all:

" ' This here is fate. I did reckon long, long years ago never to come back to these particular seas or beaches nor to see the brown maids of 'em no more. But I had to come, I was drawed, the old ancient times drawed me. And here's this old craft, much, much like my own, taking me up among the islands of my own dear dreadful dead days.'

" ' Like your own? ' said we. ' Is the *Good Hope* like your own? '

" ' Aye, like the *Silver Star*,' said the old man.

" And then he woke up as it were out of a dream and looked at us and said cunning-like:

" ' What mean you asking such questions? I never had a ship.'

"But we saw there was fear in him and wondered. We asked him why he shivered so, and he said:

"'I'm being drawed on, drawed on!'

"And then he sat upon my chest, the very one you've seen up at my house, sir, aye, that same chest, just like a white-bearded gloomy idol, staring and fiddling with his fingers that we let on to each other had nipped many a throat. There's some that carries their deeds about them like scalps on an Indian's waist-belt or as a necklace about their necks like a bear's claws on an Esquimaux gal, and others carry 'em close to their breasts like them that's Catholics and hug what they call scapularies, so you mayn't know a man's a Roman till you lay him out for burial in the great deep. Those things are charms, maybe, and good, but some of us said that old Bill Blood carried his terrible deeds in his heart and showed 'em in his face when he ached inwardly. But all the same he was a very fine old man and sometimes kindly though mad, for he talked to himself, and those that do that may hear them that answer them out of their own minds. I've a terror of such as hear voices, for 'tis the evil of a man's broken mind that speaks and his old thoughts fly out against him. And sometimes terror got the old man and he rose up and cursed those southern seas and their sprinkle of islands, and when we palavered of bright brown maids and the warm shining shores and the cocoanut palms, he roared out:

" ' Dry up, you young dogs, you know not what you talk of. Oh, the maids, the maids, the sweet brown maids you talk of! '

" So to our minds there was something of a maid in his heart. And now fear was plain in him, and one Sunday he went aft and spoke to the ' old man ' pacing the poop, and he said to him:

" ' Oh, captain, sail no more this way nor in these awful seas. There's terror in me of coming here again though I was drawed here by my fate. Put her about, sir, put her about, sir, and let me get away from death and my old ancient ship! '

" The skipper and the mate and the second mate talked with him and threw out words signifying he was old and to be forgiven for his great age and the strangeness of him. For even in our captain's heart there was fear of him. And still he said:

" ' Put her about, captain, put her about; sail these island waters no more for we'll be coming up to land I know.'

" Finding no use for words with him, the two mates came down on the main-deck and took him by the arms and put him in the fo'c'sle, and said to us:

" ' See to it that this man comes aft no more to worry Captain Saul, for the captain, though very sober and kind, will put him in irons if he comes aft again.'

" And at the word ' irons ' there was a shiver in the old man, and he said:

"'Oh, don't do that, Mr Christian; for the last time I was in bilboes I did awful deeds and had mighty, mighty sorrow!'

"And he sat groaning on my old chest with his beard in his hand. A heavy silence fell upon us as the mates went aft again and we wondered what awful deeds they were that this white old man had done long, long years ago. And he spoke no more. But still we sailed nor'west, and as we sailed nor'west the madness grew in him, though suddenly he cheered up mightily. And then the old *Good Hope* sprang a leak and we couldn't find it and the water gained on us though we pumped hard. So I heard the skipper say to Mr Christian:

"'Now, Mr Christian, we must find a quiet island with a nice soft beach of decent sand and we'll beach her and plug her before she sinks.'

"And old Blood acted queer when he heard that Captain Saul and the mates were seeking for an island thereabouts before the *Good Hope* sank beneath us. He looked inwardly with much consideration and his hands fiddled with each other and his eyes were mostly upon the deck again, and sometimes he put the fear of God into our hearts as he threw out hints of wicked deeds and things done thereabouts in the very islands under our lee and coming up strong out of the water. That night, after we'd raised the land, I heard him crying in his bunk about a brown maid.

"'Aye, a bright brown maid,' he said.

" And he called her by her name in the soft lingo of the islands. Oh, very soft and sweet he was as if he was a young lover offering gifts with hope in his heart. And the next morning we came in among these islands with our old ship low in the water and we pumping. And we sought for a harbour in one island and found none. But old Bill Blood ups and says when he went aft boldly:

" ' I'm a pilot, cap'n, for these islands and I know 'em like the inside of my cap or the pipe between my teeth. I never thought to see the land hereabouts again after all these years, but I'll pilot her into a fine harbour if you will, sir, and put her on a beach where I've laid myself in the old days.'

" And the skipper being agreeable he went up the fore-rigging and out on the fore-yard to conn the ship as we rounded a point with palms on it. And as he was going aloft he said to me:

" ' Tom Gale, maybe I can show you a strange ship, mate; aye, and there was awful deeds done in her as ever was.'

" He took us into a harbour which was nigh land-locked, but with a fine beach and a tangle of brush behind and hills around it. And the old man cried out to us on deck and said:

" ' This is the same place and 'tisn't. Aye, 'tis altered strangely! '

" But all the same our skipper found the harbour good and likely, and we put the old hooker ashore, finding a soft bed for her. And old Blood said:

" ' Aye, so I'm here again, again, you villains ! '

" He wasn't speaking to us, but to strange dead men. And he went on as the tears ran down his face. And I heard him say :

" ' Oh, my beautiful, beautiful maid ! '

" So we all allowed he was mad. The next day we found the leak and pumped the water out of her and anchored her in the middle of the harbour so as to give us a rest and maybe a run ashore. And the next day was the Sabbath and all things were gay and hope like a rising glass. And Captain Saul said to Mr Christian :

" ' The men have worked hard these last days. They shall have liberty to go ashore on this desert island.'

" We were full of joy to get ashore, for there's a big strangeness in an unknown island, and a fine adventure. So we cheered when the ' old man ' said we could go. But old Bill Blood cheered nothing and sat on my chest, with his chin on his hands, staring as if he saw white ghosts. He who'd been so bold now looked sadly and was no more full of himself or of the deeds he'd wrought. But we, after the nature of men, egged him on and some jeered him. So he rose up and said :

" ' Aye, I'll go ashore if all the ghosts stand in rows before me on the red beach. But you men don't know what you speak of ! '

" So he came with us and we rushed along the beach hurrah-ing and picking up shells and playing like boys out of school. And along by

the edge of the beach there were cocoanut palms and away back thick brush mixed and mingled together and dark-like, and the sun was bright overhead. The old man came last and often he stood and pondered with his chin in his hand. And I stayed with him for he took hold of me. And he said:

" ' This is the way, mate. If there's any way this is it. Maybe I was wrong and maybe I was right, but if it's true the land has rose up. She'll be thereabouts, she'll be thereabouts.'

" ' Who'll be thereabouts? ' asked I.

" ' Why the ship, you fool,' said he. ' That's where she should be for there was a deep, deep bay here where we're walking. A full forty years ago that was, and if the land's rose up these trees have growed.'

" ' What ship are you talking of, old son? ' asked I.

" And he looked at me and shook his head.

" ' Why, the *Silver Star* I came here in forty years ago, forty long years ago,' said old Bill, ' and I the last alive! '

" Then he walked straight through the brush and we followed him, nor did any man laugh now or clap another on the back. And we came into the thick of a wood and saw nothing. Then he said to me:

" ' Go ahead now and tell me if you see aught.'

" And though queerly scared I went a bit of a way into the dark wood and said:

" ' I see nought.'

" And he answered me:

" ' Why, is there no ship there, mate? Have the rats and ants eaten her, or have the dead men who were in her sailed her to hell or to the bloody moon? '

" And we gathered round him.

" ' Why, what dead men? ' asked I, trembling as I own.

" ' Dead men's bones,' said he, with a roar, ' the men killed aboard her. She was a fine old ship like our own, mates, but very very old and ancient with a cocked-billed bowsprit. A very strange old craft, bluff-bowed, and heavy to look at, but oh! she could sail and chased many.'

" ' Why, was you a pirate? ' asked one of the port watch.

" And old Blood turned about and then about again, and said to himself:

" ' 'Twas forty years ago and yet, mates, it might be yesterday and wet blood upon the deck! Let's look for her.'

" But we couldn't find her for all our seeking. And the old man cheered up again strangely and lost the shakes he'd had.

" ' 'Tis the wrong island maybe after all,' said he. ' There's a strange likeness in the islands of this great sea. Ah, you thought poor old Bill was a pirate what done awful deeds! '

" So we all cheered up and laughed and slapped each other on the back. And two of the boys ran deep into the wood. And soon we heard them cooeying to us out of the thick dark wood.

We rose up and went the way they called us and Bill Blood after us. And in a little hollow of the big dark woods we found a great old ship. She was the very dead spit and ghost of the kind of craft that old Bill had guffed of, very old in fashion, rigged not as we rig a ship nowadays, and she had a bowsprit that cocked itself half-way up to the sky and her gear was strange and old, all in rags and Irish pennants. Bluff she was in the bows and square at the stern with great quarter-galleries that had carvings and signs of old gilt like as they had on old Spanish ships that sailed the Spanish seas and the Pacific in the times before the memory of any man that lives. And there she stood with all her gear rotten, but part of her old sails hanging down, some of them held up by the bunt and all of them in rags and tatters as though great gales had blown through them. And long queer creepers climbed aboard her and she had bushes on her deck and sharp grasses and flowers. And Bill leant upon my shoulder and he said:

" ' That's my ship, my old ship, the dreadful old ship in which we wrought awful deeds! '

" The creepers were climbing over her like snakes and it was a wonder she held together, but maybe the trees shored her up some, being clean against her bulwarks. And on the beach alongside of her one of the boys kicked against a skull. The boy laughed for he was a rare young devil. There were other bones by it; 'twas some one hove up from the bottom of the sea when the

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bottom rose and put the ship on dry land. And that same devil of a boy stood on my shoulders and laid hold of one of the trees that climbed into her. But when he got on the deck he cried out:

"'Oh, Tom, lemme down, 'tis a ship of skeletons: she's so full of bones!'

"But some of us men climbed up to him. And we said to old Bill Blood:

"'Will you come aboard, old son?'

"And after a long while he nodded and answered to us:

"'Aye, I'll come. I'll come!'

"So we pulled him aboard. And with our heels we could kick great chunks of dry rot out of the deck here and there, but some of it was sound. All along the decks were skeletons, all about the main-deck and round about the old capstan, or the hole where it had been before it capsized and fell through to the deep kelson of her. And old Bill Blood walked as bold as brass, but with a white, white face among the skeletons, and he named them to us one after the other.

"'What, there you sit, Philip?' he said, speaking to one set of bones that lay against the mast. 'Oh, you sit there still, my gay lad, as you sat forty years ago.'

"And another he called by my name, 'Old Tom' was what he called him. Another one I reckoned was a nigger even before he showed us his curved shin bones and another was a Kanaka, he let on, and one a very bloody-minded Spaniard that he called Alphonso. And on some of the

skeletons there were bits of clothes still, gaudy though stained now with water and weather and old age, and some were shining with a touch of gold. And at last we climbed up on the poop, for the ladder was good sound wood and hardly any wear in it.

" ' The skipper as made himself skipper and lived not long therefore must be up here still,' said old Blood, again with the shakes upon him.

" And we saw a big set of bones lying stretched out, that had been a man upon his back with a sword in his hand, and his skull was rolled over, lying by the sword, and a great deep brain cut in it. And old Blood stood over him and cursed him to his hollow eyes. He used awful words and turned to us and said:

" ' This was the outrageous new skipper, and I chopped him down! '

" We gathered all about him and said:

" ' Tell us the tale; tell us the tale.'

" But he was all of a tremble and tears ran down his face. And to one skeleton he said:

" ' Good old Bob, here's your old, old shipmate come to you after all these years.'

" Then he walked aft, with his hands bidding us stay behind. And he came to a small skeleton, maybe a woman's or a boy's. And he burst out into great weeping and went down on his knees and called the little skeleton by a strange name and took on dreadfully. And some of us got the terror in us. So three sneaked out of it and climbed down on the dry land under that old

dreadful ship and went back with the rest to our own craft and sang out to the mates and the skipper what had happened. But I stayed with Bill, for though I knew not what to make of him or whether he was as wicked as some thought, yet when I saw him crying by the little skeleton I grieved for him and the strange terrible days he'd seen. And somehow it seemed to me he went back to the old dreadful days when there was fresh blood upon the decks and all his deeds were fresh. Then he seemed to lose knowledge of me and picked up the captain's sword and ran at me and drove me over the side. So I went away through the wood to where I heard the other men calling to our own ship at anchor. And we took the boat and told the captain and the mates about the old ship in the wood and those that were there dead in bright clothes and colours and how old Bill knew the ship and all that was in her. And how he cried over some little dry bones half covered up in rotten crimson and cloth of gold.

" ' Where is the man? ' said Captain Saul. ' Bring him up before me.'

" So I raised up my hand and said:

" ' Why, sir, he's still aboard her all among the dust and bones with the great sword in his hand, and he drove me overboard with oaths and dreadful curses in English and Spanish, and some strange foreign lingo he used talking to the bones he cried over.'

" Then the skipper asked:

" ' Are these lies or are the men mad? '

" And I said to Captain Saul soberly enough:

" ' Why, sir, if you and Mr Christian and Mr Wilding will get lanterns and come through the wood I'm game to show you whether we're liars or mad.'

" For we'd spent the day in the wood and now the dark came down upon us. We could hear old Bill howling afar off in his old ancient ship. And Mr Christian said:

" ' Aye, sir, why not? 'Tis a notion. 'Tis a strange tale of an old ancient ship and I'd like to see it.'

" And Captain Saul answered him:

" ' Let it be so, Mr Christian. Mr Wilding, see the men have lanterns and arms, for who knows what may happen in this strange land? '

" So we set out, but some of the crowd shied off it and slunk away into the fo'c'sle and sat shivering. But the others came ashore with us with lanterns and guns and swords. And with a lantern in my fist I took the trail and went ahead into the wood. Captain Saul and Mr Christian walked behind me soberly and Mr Wilding came behind the rest. Yet one of the six of us lost his gay stout heart in the darkness and shied off back to our own ship. And I heard Captain Saul say to Mr Christian:

" ' Is there anything known of any old pirate ship that sailed hereabouts? Have you heard any tale of the sea as to it, Mr Christian? '

" The mate owned that he'd heard none. But

he said he had a notion in his mind that years ago he'd known natives talk of 'The Island of the Ship' and the bones that none dared go to, all of which he took to be heathen folly. And we came to the ship. Upon the poop of her we heard old Bill's footsteps as he paced to and fro, going back and forth with groanings. And our skipper hailed him and said:

"'Blood, is that you aboard this old craft?'

"And Bill put his head over the side and said:

"'Aye, sir, but be civil and give me the rightful proper handle to my name, for I'm Captain Blood of this great ship as I was before the dog whose skull I split took her away from me. Come aboard, captain, come aboard, you and your mates and your men.'

"So I and another that knew the way climbed aboard first and helped the skipper and the two mates aboard. And we stood back on the main-deck. And the captain and the mates went up the poop ladder each with a lantern in his fist. And it was as dark above, save for the rising moon, as the inner lands of hell. But old Blood was very civil and proud, as he stood up bigly, and I heard him say:

"'Welcome aboard my ship, captain, sit you down, sir, sit you down. There's nought I can offer you, but you're welcome.'

"Captain Saul took him at that, aye, and acknowledged he was rightfully the skipper. And he was very gracious though he couldn't sit down for the rottenness of things. But he leant

against the rail and spoke to him, giving him the proper handle to his name and being very civil, for there was a great power in the voice of old Bill Blood when he stood on the deck of his own ship with the white bones about him. Now the moon came over the hill, a great moon sailing, and she lighted things up and dimmed the lanterns. And when the great moon shone through the trees, that were higher than the topsail yards of this strange old craft, my shivering mate let on she had crawled into the woods to hide her shame and the strange and awful deeds that were done in her when she was in salt water. And as we looked over the side there were the skeletons of those that had been hove overboard still alongside of her. Aye, and some were green with smelling herbs and wild grasses, as the old ship was with creepers up her rotten rigging, creepers that held her together like the limbs of krakens and sea-devils, and those great evil things of the sea that crawl about ships and send their arms aboard to look for men's flesh. And awakened birds chattered in her cross-trees and nesting birds were uneasy in her tops. But our skipper and Bill Blood stood up in the light of the moon as she swam bright over the stump of the ship's foremast that was broken and jagged as though it had been smit by lightning. As I said, Captain Saul and the mates were very civil. And again old Blood repeated of his words:

" ' Welcome aboard my ship, for I'm aboard my own ship once more. I would you could sit

down. In the old days I could have offered you fine strange liquors and the wines of Spain and great long cigars from Havana.'

"' Say no more of that, captain,' said Captain Saul, ' we ask for nothing, but are glad to come aboard and see you. Could you tell us your tale and the tale of this great ship in the pathless woods?'

"' Ah, but why should I tell it,' said Captain Blood, ' and yet—why not, why not? But 'twould be a strange tale of this old ship so ancient, and these dead men, some that I loved and others dreadful in their deeds. Aye, look at that skull there, Captain Saul, he that was captain for a while! You see that great sword cut in his brain pan and the gold and scarlet rags upon his fleshless bones? This was his sword and mine.'

" And he picked the sword up again and, with the point of it in the deck and his hands upon the rusty hilt, he said as if he was dreaming and as though he'd yarned to them for a long, long while:

"' And, as I tell you, they rose up agin me and this man made himself captain or was made such by them that feared my ways. They were very bloody-minded men, but in me by God's grace there was at times a touch of mercy and gentleness, though I did awful deeds in my youth before repentance came and a change of heart that was wrought in a wonderful way by her that is here that I will tell you of. Aye, her yonder, that still lies in cloth of gold weathered by sea and rain

and sunlight, changed my dark heart. Oh, very bright she was, bright and brown, and she stood up like a noble young pine and looked the world in the face as though she was a great queen out of Savaii or Upolu. They swore she came of a line of sea-kings and there was power in her, aye, and splendour of love. And God gave her great love for me when I went ashore upon her rich island in gold and scarlet and with jewels about my neck and this rusted sword, that was then so fierce and bright, by my side. And I won her and brought her to this island, for it was ours, though she and her people knew of it, seeing they came here at certain seasons to worship a god that lives in the hill here and in great years speaks in fire and thunder. But now she stayed here with me, the king of this great ship and of the island and of this bright woman who was its queen. And sometimes she sailed with us and sometimes not. But he whose head is split and grins there went against me with part of the crew for love of her sweetness and her splendour. And rising up at sea they robbed me of my high authority, taking me by force and fraud and the strange guile of sleeping drugs, and they put me, me, in irons! And he that grins there upon my deck sailed this ship back and anchored her here, here where she lies, for it was then the sea though now dry land. And this strange-practising devil, overcome by love of her, sent word that the captain needed her. So she came on board with joy. And I heard her

when she cried out, I being in irons in the half-deck. But then I was a mighty man and they had never judged my strength when she called. Big I am now and for an old man strong and broad. But as you see me I am the same kind of wreck as my old ship is, but what she was I was for she was a strong ship. And with power and the loss of skin and flesh I wrenched the bolts out of the deck that held me and picked up the end of the bilbo that was on my leg and came on deck and ran aft. None saw me, for they were gathered together abaft the mainmast while she I loved and the new skipper were on the poop. But when my party in the ship that were nigh as strong as his saw me they broke out with joy against him. And as I was, with the sword I took from one, I went up on the poop and fought him. She I loved stood by and smiled on me and there was a glory in her face for she knew my strength and her smile on me was victory. Yet there was such wicked fierceness in him at the loss of his power or the loss of her that, seeing he had no chance against my vengeance, he gave up his life to me, but turned on her and ran her through. And I clove him through the brain and, forgetting all else but her, I lifted my little brown queen in my arms and laid her down with a rolled flag under her dear head. And I would have looked at her wound, but she smiled at me and made me kiss her. And so she died. And with the dead man's sword and bitter tears I went down into the fight. When it was evening

and the moon rose over us, aye, as she shines now over yonder, and when she was clear of the hill, there were but two of us sound men and like to live. And some of those that were wounded went overboard and we shot them as they screamed, squattering like wounded ducks. There was at last but the one man left with me and the terror of the dead got hold of him in the night, and he jumped overboard and swam ashore. I heard him crying out in the dark woods, and save for her who still lived in my heart I was all alone. I sat by her seeing her smile on me in the light of the moon, she who would speak no more. And that night I scuttled the ship, wishful to sink her as she lay in this round harbour, hoping she should be my death, my coffin and theirs. And about dawn she foundered. But I never reckoned on my own strength or the hold life had on me: and life had its way as it always will, for when she sank I went down with her and rose and, swimming, fought for my life. And in a maze or madness I swam ashore. He that had been running wild in the woods and howling to the moon found me on the beach like a dead man, and he wailed over my body, me his good captain, and called me back to life. And, rising up, he gave me his shoulder, and we saw the old ship sunk to her topsail yards. With him I went up to the village to my dear queen's house, she that ruled her people and me. And the next night their god who lived in the mountain spoke in fire and thunder, and the island was

shaken at its moorings. So in fear all her peop
fled in their canoes and I with them. And, si
since then all these years I've sailed the seas, b
not this sea. And I've lived in many countr
and had more wives than I remember and
many lands there are my children. But in
these years she whose bones lie here in this gr
ship was in my heart. And I remembered h
some wise man of her race, looking in my ha
had sworn I should die aboard this ship. A
being old I thought to come back here in y
ship, sir, though terror got me on the way. I
I have no mind to speak more of these thin
for the spirit breaks within me, and I am an
old man.'

" And Captain Saul spoke to him:

" ' Would it be an ease to you, Captain Blo
if these bones of hers were given Chris
burial? '

" But the old man answered:

" ' I thank you kindly, Captain Saul, but
be, let be! Leave me a lantern or two, for
lone light of the moon seems evil. Aye, there
is again as she was that night my dear died! '

" ' I wouldn't leave you here,' said Cap
Saul kindly. ' Come back with us aboard
ship.'

" But the old man would not. He shook
head and looked terrible and very strange
though he knew he was bound for the por
death. And he picked up the old rusty sw
and leant upon it and again said:

" ' Nay, good Captain. Leave me, but leave me lanterns.'

" And so we left him there upon the poop in the moonlight and the darkness of the shadows and the light of his lanterns. And some of us shook and said they saw ghosts about him. And as we went back the terrors of the night got at us, for behind every tree was some ghost and the moon poured cold fear on us, making us afraid. So to get back to our warm kind fo'c'sle and sit upon one's chest for supper seemed salvation, it was like being warm in London River after big fierce fighting days in the western seas. But as we went I heard Captain Saul say to his mates:

" ' 'Tis necessary to give these bones burial. It will ease the old man's mind though he's been but a bloody pirate in the past if the truth were known.'

" I took an anchor watch that night. But about two bells in the middle watch I heard a great cry out of the woods. And the hair stood up on my head and the flesh moved on my bones. I shook in my shoes and called up Mr Christian on account of the fear that was in me, for he was a gentler man than Mr Wilding and not so likely to damn me for being a cur just for an owl crying in the woods. And the mate came out on deck all in the light of the moon and heard another cry. But the cry came out of the dark woods where the old ancient pirate ship was. And I stood up close to the mate and said:

" ' Oh, sir, isn't she too much of an old ancient ship to be the age he says? Isn't she a much more ancient old ship, sir, than that? '

" And he turned to me and said:

" ' Maybe; how can I tell, Gale? '

" There were mighty strange notions in my mind and I wondered if the ship was a real ship and if old Bill was a live man and not some bodied ghost of an old ancient pirate that had stolen a body and wandered the earth like Judas with the awful deeds he had done. And I whispered that to the mate. But Mr Christian said:

" ' Hold up, my son, fear nothing, trust in God. Maybe she's older or less old than we think. Isn't she weeded up and worn away, all flowers and birds' nests and broken decks and rotten gear? '

" So he comforted me, being a good man and a noble seaman. And in the morning the skipper and he and Mr Wilding and I went again to the ship and three more with us. And the captain carried a prayer book and a bible very soberly. And the four of us men had bars and shovels and a mattock made out of an old adze.

" ' We're bound to bury bones that's long overdue,' said my own mate. ' 'Tis a strange trip, I'd rather another had it. And as for Captain Blood or Bill or whatsoever you call him, he must be dead crazy. We'll not have him in the fo'c'sle again, I'm hoping.'

" But I told him very short to belay his slack jaw and let's have no more of it. So we came to the ship and our skipper hailed her.

" ' Captain Blood! '

" But there was no answer. And it was I that went aboard first and, as I thought, I found him sleeping on the deck and the sword by his side and her bones close up against him and her little skull in the great hook of his arm, and there was a smile upon his face as if he slept good. But he was dead. I told the others of it, and when they came aboard Captain Saul said:

" ' Aye, 'tis no more than I thought. He was fey last night and saw his end coming and knew he'd see no other moon rise. There's a smile upon his face, Mr Christian. Many a time I've thought that at such an age there's a great and mighty comfort in death. For a good man or a bad 'tis a great, great thing when he's old. Come, men, we'll bury him and her bones with him in good earth.'

" ' And as to the other bones, Captain? ' asked Mr Wilding.

" ' Let them be,' said the skipper.

" For his mind was only on this old man and his bright brown doxy that was a sweet live woman long, long years ago.

" ' He was a bloody pirate, I judge,' said Mr Christian, ' but a good lover, too.'

" ' Aye, a good sound lover of eighty,' said Mr Wilding.

" ' Get the grave dug and I'll read over him,' said Captain Saul very soberly, ' and, if you will, dig a pit for the others, and you, Mr Wilding, if you have a mind, can read over them.'

"And these things being done and our ship good and readied we sailed away. And once in the middle watch Mr Christian told me our own Captain Saul had been a good lover too and had lost one he loved when he and she were both young. But I heard no more of that story. Captain Saul was not so open of speech as some, not even so open as old Bill that we buried with his dear doxy in that dark island, his bones and her bones by the bones of the old ancient ship, built of strange scented woods and much salted and great of endurance, but lying there hard and fast ashore in the middle of a wood with a forest climbing aboard her every day and growing eager and bright out of her very bones."

A BAY DOG-WATCH

WHEN a good dry ship is hove-to the crowd for'ard is usually happy and every man-jack in the fo'c'sle of the *Timbuctoo*, bound for Port Lyttleton with a general cargo, had no complaint to make. With a steady snorter from the south'ard which only veered slowly and a skipper who favoured the old hooker there was every prospect of an easy time till a breach of blue came in the north-west sky and the bo's'n piped "Hands make sail." Moreover, it was Sunday, and when the men came down from aloft, leaving the ship under the lower main-topsail, a tot of grog had made them ready for a whacker from good old Tom Atkinson, who had laid up in his composition as many yarns as a bolt-rope or the months in his long years.

"Spin us a cuffer, old son," said Bob Way of the starboard watch. "What do you say, mates?"

"We're hove-to and nothin' doin'," said Way's fellow fore-top man, Jack Spence, "so a good old lie from Tom will be as sweet as another tot."

But white-bearded Atkinson shook his big head.

"I tells the truth," he said sternly, "and nothin' but it. That's my repitation, Jack, and

it's known East and West. When a man's been to sea near sixty years, man and boy, he's no need to grind up lies as he lays awake to spit out later. The truth's enough for me. Gimme a match, some one."

Jack handed him a round match-box with the legend " Bell and Black " upon it. Old Tom inspected it thoughtfully as he opened it and took out more lights than one.

" What are you pipin' the box so for? " asked the owner.

" I'm wonderin'," said Tom; " if I ever spun you coves the yarn of the wreck of the *Bhutan*, and Mad Walker, likewise known as Wicked or Crazy Walker, and a box of matches, likewise Bell and Black's, and how I swum for 'em and saved not a few folks thereby? "

The crowd stated unanimously that they had never heard the yarn of the *Bhutan* and Wicked Walker and the matches, but eagerly added the information, much desired by the old fo'c'sle-man, that they ached to do so.

" Then I'll tell it," said Tom, " and bimeby you liars will spin the same old cuffer aboard some other ship and take your Bible oaths it happened to you. But you'll spile it and fair massacree it without no doubt, for I've heard no yarn aboard this old hooker that I didn't spin myself that was worth half a tot, or even the drains of one."

This was obviously a challenge to the liars of both watches, but as it was well known that

Tom was still too strong to lick and much too old to fight with, those who would have aspired to take his place if he went overboard held their peace.

"Yarnin' is a special gift," said Tom, "a very special gift it is, not gained by eddication: no, nor by experience, for the wildest cove I ever knew, as had knifed men in half the ports of the world, and bin knifed and shot and cut about dreadful by doctors gettin' bullets out of him, and had bin a soldier and married fourteen times couldn't make as much of it all as I can out of one measly match, and if you asked him private about his wives all he had to say was that ten was good women, three as could be put up with and one a fair royal scorcher. This same cove was a good sailorman and could do fine work like a Greek and he let on words wasn't wanted in courtin', though for my part I've found them useful. But there, every man has his own way, and the thing he can do, unless he's a Dutchman, and thanks be there ain't none aboard this craft. One cove is good at yarns, another is the biggest liar, or has the biggest arm or measures more round the calf than the rest, or maybe he has luck at cards or is cutest at blind-swaps, or maybe 'e's bin in a mut'ny. Another chap may have a ticket and know navigation or he may have bin whalin', and I once knew a cove at sea who had to brag about havin' bin a potman and a chucker-out with high hopes of a beer-shop of his own, hopes as was dashed by a female skippin' with

what he called his savin's, but what I knew to be his robbin's, for he wasn't to be trusted in the fo'c'sle alone and the only reason he didn't steal the mainmast and the anchors out of any craft he sailed in was that they was too heavy. But there *are* men wot's got more than one thing to go on as they wander, and I'm one, for though I never killed a man as far as I know, havin' got away to sea while three was in hospital and having only married really legal once, I've seen a sight of things and can tell 'em like few. So here's for the *Bhutan* and Wicked Walker and the matches that nigh cost me my life, but brought life to many. And before I begin I'll have another match or two and after the yarn no one will grudge it, or he's a measly swine as ever was."

And when Jack surrendered his box he knew he would never salve any of its contents, for old Tom smoked matches and no mistake about it.

"Hark," said Tom, holding up his hand, "ain't it just nuts to hear that heavenly harmony, as I knowed a parson cove call it, in the riggin'? When a man has a free spell below it's good and fine to hear the old craft singin', if so be she's sound and dry, especial in the fo'c'sle, and it seems to me that a bally ship is like a bally harp, and harps like other musical hinstruments has their differences, one soundin' finer than another and so it is with ships, and I mind a time in the *Bhutan* when we was hove-to in her in this same

blasted old bay when I first made the same remark and somehow it led to words and a rough house, for Mad Walker, or Wicked Walker, hit a cove about a mouth-organ or a jew's harp or a hocarina, for she was a musical ship with four of us nailers at the squiffer and one that let on he could pound thunder out of a pianner. A good hinterestin' ship she was and a fine workin' crowd for'ard and as good a lot aft as a sailorman could wish to see, mates and skipper and the skipper's wife, no interferin' dirt-finder she was, and she had a lovely kid, a girl of nine or ten, and a voice like a hangel.

" As I lets on the ' old man ' was a good sort, but I own he was a driver and might have bin a cross betwixt a Blue-nose and a Yank for the way he handled his ship. Add a bit of Scotch to the bloke and there you have him, hard as nails but chatty, so to speak, and not over-stingy in grub as you might reckon, and a deal readier, after the manner of his like, to risk the ship and all in it than one man's life. For he had a kind heart and was good to Wicked Walker when the bug bit and the cove was crazy. Not that the perishin' blighter was always barmy or off it, for at times he was all there and nothin' over and nothin' wantin', and as good a sailorman as need be and none better but me aboard the *Bhutan* though I was young then, for 'twas long ago. But Walker had fits and none of the ' I cure Fits ' coves what adorns Yank noospapers could have cured him. And, moreover, there was times

it looked as if he had a secret jug and got the jimjams, so what with foamin' at the mouth and bein' all stiff and kinked up and then starin' at you as if you was a rummier beast than a red rat with three tails and him half a mind to scoff you then and there, he wasn't ezackly the blighter to take home and interjuice to your sister or make a lodger of. And, moreover, he didn't sleep for days at a time, which is a red signal to them as know. The ' old man ' wouldn't let him go aloft arter he had a fit on the main-t-gall'n yard, when one of us, grabbin' of him desperate, hollered for help till we lowered him down on deck with the clew-line. And the skipper's missis mixed the cove a drink out of the medicine chest which done him good.

" That was in this selfsame howlin' Bay of Biscay, and if I let the whole coil run through my hands, or, so to speak, sang out all the marks and deeps, we'd be in the middle of next week till we got through. But I never was a man to believe that the whole history of a v'y'ge must go with a yarn and so we'll come to the Roarin' Forties and the ' old man ' bent on a passage and goin' as far south as he dast and, in a fog and p'r'aps the compass gone queer, runnin' in a bee line for blue hell and pilin' the *Bhutan* up on Kerguelen Land, the most unholy place I ever struck, and very hard we struck it as you'll see, and poor Wicked Walker was cured of fits permanent. And now, you mark me, all this yarn came out of my sayin' a while back, ' Gimme

a match,' and Jack Spence here handin' me a box of Bell and Black's, same as I knowed in Australia long ago when I took to the bush, and you'll see where the match comes in, or might come in, when I says it was July and the perishin' crowd of rocks they calls the Kerguelen Islands was fairly freezin'. Matches! Ah, I should say so, and more than that, mates, *one* match! Aye, my lads, and a wet match too may make all the differ 'twixt life and death and, moreover, a man might fight for a match and kill for it and swim to hell-and-gone for it, and tons near him and him no better for 'em. For after all you and me might go at it great whacks for sixpence up agin' the Bank of England where there's gold in hogsheads and they ladle it in shovels. Stare, my lads, do, but you're young and don't see it as you will, for I'll work you up the drayma till it's as plain as the nose on a Jew's face.

"Oh, but the old *Bhutan* had bin hard at it, running under her taupsails and the main t'gallant set over for brag when she should have bin snugged down and favoured a bit. But that were never Sneezer's way (that's what we called him, for he let on as he'd make the old ship sneeze if she wasn't up to snuff) and away we went with this unholy land ahead and why in the name of all that's ugly and wicked we wasn't all drowned would puzzle a row of schoolmasters as long as from here to Halifax, workin' it out on slates and a prophet to give 'em hints. But believe me or not as you please, not a soul

was lost, and I reckon it came clean out of the hands of Providence that we ripped a bit of her bottom out on a rock in Royal Sound and, swinging clear, with the foremast and main topmast over the side, drifted into the lee of Wyvill Island and got out two boats in less time than a whaler could, for that was where the mate (I disremember his name) was a rip-snorter. He was a good sailorman but narvous, whereby he'd put stores and various gadgets in one boat, but somehow had left out the matches as I let on, and the stoo'ard, a useless cove and no real good even at his own job of dish-jerkin', forgot to remind him, or wouldn't, for he was mean to a degree and hung to a burnt match even. So there we was in the lee of a blighted small island and a fog about us and the wind pipin' pillaloo and the old ship blowin' air out of her and sinkin' within a cable's length and we settin' in the two boats while Sneezer argued with the mates as to where we was and his missis sayin' her prayers, but keepin' calm with it all, for she knowed her man and his coolness was tremenjous. The kid cried some, but cheered up when I said 'Pretty, we're goin' ashore,' and the blokes laughed and it done 'em good.

"'This is Kerguelen Land,' says the skipper, 'it can't be nothin' else.'

"'Respectfully, sir, it might be hell,' says the mate, 'and a mere unnamed rock at that.'

"'Wait till the fog clears and keep the boats in the smooth,' says Sneezer, 'and I'll bet you,

Mr James ' (yes, that was his name), ' I'll bet you a dollar it's what I say. And I wishes now I'd not come so far south, blast me if I don't! '

" And the second greaser backed up the skipper, so that the mate, bein' depressed about his observations and his not missin' of Kerguelen, dried up and presently owned they was right. For the fog cleared and we saw a fair procession of islands and big hills, one of 'em called Mount Ross, so the skipper let on, but havin' no chart it wasn't easy pickin' t'other from which. So which of the small ones we landed on I don't know to this day, for it warn't the chief one till days after, when the sea went down. And in the meantime we scrowged on to a partic'lar measly one, all rocks, queer shaped, made so the skipper said of bay-salt, a thing I couldn't understand for they was regular rum ones and as hard as a sailorman's life, which has no equal outside hell, though it has points at times. There was a lot of grass stuff, very rummy to see, that some called cabbage, which was wholesome though it didn't look it and good for the scurvy, which didn't brighten us up none, for it looked as if we'd have no time to catch it but be dead of cold before our teeth dropped out, though what good teeth was likely to be wasn't as clear as Mount Ross or the tears in the kid's eyes or the plain madness in Crazy Walker. Now in spinnin' this cuffer, bein' all hunky here and knowin' how it fell out 'tis easy to be cheerful, but I own freely it was a black look-out as the pore little Cockney

cove said when a big nigger fightin' man kissed that pore cove's missis afore his eyes. Things warn't what they might have bin and old Sneezer scratched his head when he took a *cultus nannitch*, as they says in British Columbia, and seed nothin' but rank desolate horrors in front of us. Howsoever, he kept his pecker up and hencouraged us good, I'll say that for him, driver as he was and the cause of the catsastofry by Great Circle Sailing bein' carried out regardless.

"'Now,' says he, 'the first thing is a fire and a bit of shelter, men, and presently we'll find the biggest island, and on that, accordin' to the books, there's likely a refuge house and grub in it left by whalers and the French Government what owns this misbegotten handful of rocks right in the fairway. So get a move on, men, and pick up some driftwood and look particular slippy.'

"And his wife hugged the little girl and I seed her shudder and shake, but she was a rare-plucked one and held her own better than many a man.

"'Now where's the matches?' sings out the skipper, who didn't smoke.

"'Yes, where?' says Mr James, feelin' in his pockets.

"'The stoo'ard'll have 'em,' said the second greaser, and the stoo'ard looked as big a fool as he was, and a boiled owl in a pan of hot water was a genius to him and as bright as the brass pins in a man-o'-war's fife-rail.

"'I ain't got none,' says the stoo'ard, silly-like.

"'What man has matches?' says the skipper, and we feels unanimous in our pockets, and not a single bloomin' blighter of us opened his hash-trap and we looked as silly as wet hens in a puddle.

"'What—none of you?' says the mate.

"'Seemin'ly, none, sir,'" says I.

"And at that Crazy Walker laughed like a laughing jackass on a fine mornin' in the bush, but never a word he said. For if I didn't say it before I says now that one of his mad ways was sulks and grins mixed, but no jaw at all. And when his sulks was on he hated us worse than p'ison, and we had held frequent consultations as to tippin' him overboard before worse come of it. And I own freely I was for it, but the majority said a madman should be humoured. And one cove allowed that to drown him would be a crime, mad or none. The silliness of some men is perdigious, though I have to own if we'd up-ended Walker over the rail we might have left our frozen bones among the Kerguelen cabbage, as it turned out.

"As we turns, hearin' Walker snigger, and looks at the blighter, he walkers off and sets himself on a high rock above the sea where it raced fearful for a bit and sat down there with his ugly thin face towards us and took out his pipe and filled it with terbacker and while we watched pulled out a box and struck three matches one after another and with the third

got a light. And then he smoked a puff or two and findin' his tongue told us what he seemin'ly thought of us, and such viciousness I never heard come out of a man's mouth and we'd done nothin': bar considerin' whether he ought to be let live and that he didn't know. His words I disremember, but the queer squeal of his voice comes back to me, as I see his whitey-brown face and blazin' eyes and him settin' on that rock, holdin' up the match-box and tellin' us he'd see us all perish of frost afore he'd give us one, and that if we so much as moved a step towards him he'd heave the matches in the drink. So we holds a consultation, at least the skipper and the mates did, and we others done a jawbation and some was for soft sawder and some for shootin' and some for cowin' of him down by the heye, though whose heye was to do it was the question and none very strong on his own seein' that Crazy had a knife and kept it wickedly sharp and had, moreover, come over most of us with his heye time and again.

" ' Now, now, Walker, give *me* those matches,' says the skipper, movin' a bit.

" ' Another step or pull your gun and overboard they goes, old son,' says Walker very fierce and disrespectful, and the ' old man ' turns as red in the face as the north-west sun in a fog, but holds his hand and turns to the others.

" ' I'll try, Tom,' says the skipper's wife, but then I nips in.

" ' Don't, ma'am,' says I, ' for he's a queer

cove and hates women-folk. His guff about them is disagreeable to a degree,' says I, for truly the cove had a down on the whole sect and his language about them laid over any I could handle even when talkin' of shipowners and boardin'-house keepers, and I was always reckoned to hold my own at decent thought-out cursing, havin' had a large experience of language in all parts.

" Now I know as well as if I seed into your minds, mates, that you more'n half expects me to work the tearful kid racket on you and let on that the skipper's little gal says to her mammy, ' Oh, mammy darlin', *do* let me speak to good Mr Walker and he'll give me the matches, for I'm *so* cold, mammy ! ' and then of course Walker by all reckonin's ought to bust into tears and become a good man as ever was with heaven under his lee. But no such luck, and what the kid said, for I own she took a hand in it, was to squeal out in them silv'ry tones you reads of what you could hear on the main-royal yard in a small cyclone, ' Oh, you wicked, wicked man, I'd like to beat you.' For the kid had a proper temper, and don't you forget it. And Walker says ' You little hell-cat ' and adds wreaths of hornamental talk with the foam on his lips.

" 'Twas ever the way with me when others was jammed in a clinch to come out with a scheme, good or bad, for that's my nature, me not bein' a cove that takes a back seat natural and on'y want of eddication preventin' me from being

an admiral or the like, so I says quiet to the old man as the gale fair howled and the crowd shivered, ' Keep the dod-rotted blighter talkin', sir, and I'll slip down them rocks and climb up behind the perisher and take him in the rear.' And the ' old man ' says ' righto ' and I slips off while Walker and the skipper kept things goin' and Walker has most of the talk. Afore I thought of my scheme we'd jawbated some on shootin' him, but came to the conclusion we might miss him at thirty yards, there bein' much space round a man as they says in Texas, and even if we scored a bull he might fall over the rocks into the sea and take them matches with him. So my scheme looked best and I pushed in. But in course I knew well enough 'twas a desprit chance and, if so be the ugly swab turned and saw me as I clumb, a handy rock would finish me and my name would be Dennis. Howsoever, t'warn't no good huggin' such pleasant thoughts to my heart and I lit out, careless like at first, as if to take a *pasear* and see the lovely sights of the hisland with the gale a-blowin' and the spray a-flyin' and the roar of the outer seas like a Davy Jones's concert and the Earl of Hell holdin' a beenoh. And soon I slips into a rock crack and works my way round towards the roarin' blighter, and arter takin' a square yard of skin off of my pore legs and three times bein' nigh washed off I comes round behind him and started to climb. Pretty soon I got my head (what I wished was made of teak or some other hard wood) high

enough to see Walker's head and shoulders and I kind of spots the place I'd plant my knife if so be I could, and then a rock fetches away and I says 'oh' and ashamed I was to have said it, and Walker half faces about and spots poor Pilgarlic risin' from the sea, so to speak, and pickin' up a handy lump of rock he raises it with me as helpless as Barney in the bread-room and I roars out 'Shoot him, shoot him!' And at that I hears the skipper's gun go and by good luck the 'old man,' what couldn't commonly shoot for nuts or sour apples, plugs Crazy through the throat and over he keels with a kind of half-yelled blasphemious gurgle right on top of me, rock and all, and the match-box what he had in his left hand came flyin' with the whole caboodle, and I grabbed for it and got nothin' but the feel of it and Walker's boot in my mouth, and the rock missin' me in the Portugee pig-knot we made all together, down we went souse oh! into the tide race below us.

"Maybe you coves can reckon up in your little minds how I felt with the full half of my front teeth loose and me spittin' blood and salt water with Wicked Walker doin' his last kick nigh me, him bein' all hands, fair hairy with 'em, it seemed to me, and my whole mind all the same set on the match-box bobbin' three yards off. Once the cove grabbed me and we went under. Lucky it was my knife was in my belt, for I cut him across the sinners of his wrists, him bein' nigh dead and on'y in his flurry like a bull whale. And

risin' up, chokin', and seein' him no more I looks for the match-box and seed it in the bobble doin' a dance and five strokes fetched me to it and I grabbed it triumphant, though all the time I reckoned the matches would be wet and maybe no good arter all. And havin' got it I wondered where I'd put it, when as luck would have it I see Walker's cap nigh handy and grabbin' it I put it on and the matches in it next my wet hair. And lookin' about me in a devil of a sea I was rose up by a wave and I saw I was a good cable's length from our island and nigh another not so big. And that I made for and at high expense in skin I got ashore and lay on a rock till I fetched my lost breath. And the soreness of me was wonderful, but all the same I was as proud as a dog with two tails for the deed I'd done and I own it freely. I looked at the matches and them without experience would have been some disgruntled by observin' their wetness. But I'd travelled on land as well as by sea and had waited forty-eight hours in bitter rain for matches to dry, for the fire returns to 'em in time. So I squeezed out my hair and Walker's cap which sat on my bull head like the small half of the loaf on the big half, and shakin' the box as hard as I dast I put it back again and stood up and did a kind of joyful dance on my rock to siggerfy to the others as I was successful in my henterprize. And presently, and just in time, for the night was comin' down on us, the second greaser and four of the crowd came for me in a boat and arter a

lot of manooving fetched me off my rock roost.

" ' Got them matches? ' says the second mate.

" ' Yes, sir,' says I.

" ' Are they dry? ' he arsts.

" ' Why no, sir, not to say dry,' I answers civil, wonderin' at the kind of cove what would arst such a question with me wetter than any mermaid and shiverin' so that my teeth rattled till you'd think I was a Castiliano gal with castanets.

" ' Good lord,' says he, ' then we can't make no fire arter all.'

" And the coves looked chap-fallen as never was.

" ' They'll dry, sir,' says I, ' and we'll have a fire to-morrow.'

" But the blokes looked at me as if I was as mad as Walker, for sartinly the cold was tremenjous and to spend a wet night on wet rocks with frost as'd freeze the tail off of a brass monkey didn't seem no delight though a surprise party, so to speak.

" And so we come back to our island and I goes ashore first, bein' all of a bally hero till the fools hears the matches was wet and then bein' put down as crazy and thought little of.

" ' How long will they take to dry, Atkinson? ' arsts the skipper.

" ' That depends, sir,' I lets on, ' as to how dry the driest of us is. On me it looks like a week, but if you've a dry man or lady here ' (and

I looks at his missis) ' they may be ready to strike by the mornin'.'

" ' 'Tis a black look-out this night then,' said the skipper. ' Are you dry, Mary?'

" And the missis, who kep' up her end wonderful, said she was not to call dry, but that the kid was fairly so.

" ' Then keep the little girl dry this night for your life, ma'am,' says I, and while they made a shelter for me with an oil-skin I outs with the matches, lays 'em one by one in a dry handkercheef, rolls 'em up careful and the skipper's missis puts the rag in the little girl's bosom and says to her, says she:

" ' Now ducky, don't cry or they'll get wet.'

" So the little girl snuggles up to her and kept a stiff upper lip, I'll say that for her. And we covers the two of 'em with anythin' we could spare as they sat in the lee of a rock waitin' for sun-up. On the whole they was comfortable, or said so, though next mornin' the old gal was wet to the bone as far as her back was concerned, but what we others went through that night was a fair freezer, and nothin' but the skipper's gun and my boot kept some from lyin' down and dyin'. For I'd my plan and opened it to the skipper and he fell in with it right off and saw it was good. For what I said was:

" ' Make 'em dance, sir, and keep dancin', or before mornin' they'll be dead as Wicked Walker and no fatal error.'

" Well, I've been in many dance-houses and

come out alive, but for a long dance you can take your oath the establishment on Kerguelen that night yanked the bun. If I had ten tongues, each hung in the middle and forty horse power behind each, I couldn't tell the tenth of it. The night was as black as a common ship-owner's heart or a nig in a coal mine and it breezed up again and blew tremenjous and as cold as cold. Though we was in the lee of Wyvill Island that did but mean we got it every way and there was frost on the rocks and sea spray freezin' long before dawn. Thinkin' it over, it seems to me now that the night was a month long and the groans and cussin' of us pore coves would have sounded like the mouth of the pit to any angel if one had been fool enough to fly round Kerguelen with a view of gettin' credit for henterprize. At the best a sailorman's life ain't exactly no festa, but at its worst hell seems snug.

" ' Dance, you swabs, dance,' says I, and me and the mates and the skipper kept 'em movin', and when a cove laid down I booted him in the ribs, and if there was fat on any to begin with it was wore off of him by sunrise, and a more gashly lot the day revealed to us I never see in a horspital with a bad hepidemic on, and I've been in four and come out bones with all the bounce took out of me. There was some of the chaps got fightable and some caved in and cried, beggin' to be allowed to lie down and die sleepin', and me and the skipper and the mates was fair remorseless, though the mate owned to me

arterwards he'd have given his wife and children and his certificate to be a common stoker in a tramp sizzlin' in the Red Sea in the middle of August even with a nine-knot breeze astern.

" ' Suppose them there matches don't light at all,' says the mate to me, ' a day and a night of this will put the kibosh on the whole caboodle.'

" And I cheered him up with tales, for as you coves know, I've travelled some and heat and cold I know and hunger like a rat in my innerds and thirst that makes a man's tongue like a baked boot and his blood like tar, or so I've heard it said, and there's nothin' like thirst, nothin'.

" ' Mebbe, in the mornin' we'll get over to the big island,' says the mate, with his teeth chatterin' like topsail-sheets in a cyclone when you hits the middle of it and there ain't no wind but a sea as cross and contrary as a woman with a wet hat. ' And there,' says he, ' we may find stores and mebbe a hut and we'll be all hunky.'

" He telled the crowd so and the skipper took his oath to its bein' in the Directory that it was all O.K., and they cheered up some and spoke of hot drinks when a fire was goin', all but a pore cove from Bristol what had a stitch in his side and breathed bad and went out next day with information of the lungs. Meantime me and the mates had whittled some driftwood fine and the chips we put inside our shirts where we was driest, and some we planted in the dry little gal, sleepin' very peaceful, and the skipper had some bits of paper in a pocket book. So I had every

hope of gettin' a fire, and bad we wanted it, me not the least arter my duckin' and goin' under with Mad Walker. And, as I says, the sun rose up at last in the East and a measly sun he was, but the fog was away and the sight of the islands and the rocks was like risin' the curtains at a theayter, and we lookin' gashly with hollow eyes. At times the pore cove from Bristol fairly squealed with pain, and wakin' up the skipper's missis she done her best for him and I set about the fire, while the stoo'ard, meek as watered milk over havin' no matches, served out a bit of cold tucker, all on allowance. But as you can guess the fire was the thing, and with the gale still a-ragin' and little hope of landin' on the big island, fire was life to us, and if the matches failed and was blown out we'd see England no more, nor, for the matter of that, two days longer. Now driftwood there was some of and a good bit of wreckage from the *Bhutan*, a hen-coop or two and the like, so wood was plenty though wet, and I knowed from my experience we had to begin small with little more than a spark, and so far I didn't know how the matches was dryin' and hardly dast think of 'em. But presently the little gal woke up and her mother took 'em out of the front of her dress, and me and the skipper with our backs to windward, on account of the spray, and in the lee of a rock and under an oiler, took a look at 'em, the crowd standin' round shakin' their cold teeth at us, so to speak. And what I said was ' I thinks they're

dry enough to strike.' And the pore coves cheered feeble, all but the chap from Bristol that hadn't the breath to spare. He was all eyes and awful anxious.

" ' Can we try it, Atkinson? ' says the skipper, and I took a feel of the head of a match and let on I reckoned we might. And there was four matches all told and not another to make five.

" ' Who's to strike 'em, sir? ' arsts the crowd, for all at once the horror of bad luck struck 'em same as it struck me. It seemed the thing for the ' old man ' to do it, or at least Mr James, but I could see the skipper's hand shake and the mate stood back as though sayin' he was no candidate and the second greaser wasn't eager. So I could see, plain as I see you chaps, that I was in for it and if the matches failed what eyes they'd have for me! But a chap called Brown from Lime'ouse sings out:

" ' Atkinson 'as the luck, sir, he saved 'em; let 'im light the fire.'

" But I offered 'em to the skipper's missis and she turned as white as bleached, knowing well what hung on it with ice in the puddles and the wind roarin' like a hungry lion. So I spoke out and what I says was this, so far as I remember:

" ' 'Tis your wish then I should try it, sir, but if it goes wrong don't blame me, for 'tis a ticklish job and the wind's awful and the wood's wet and maybe the matches ain't as dry as they might be. But I'll do what a man can.'

" And I set about it, and in the lee of the rock

where the little gal had been lyin' I puts down under a cap a bit of paper and about a pipeful of wood scrapin's and a few thin slivers, and the chips I kept handy. The skipper and the mates stood about me makin' with their coats a kind of a sort of a tent and I dried my hands on the little gal's skirt and went down on my knees watchin' for a lull. And then it breezed up awful and there was a squall that lasted ten minutes, and the top of a big wave come over the rock and if I'd had the matches out 'twould have been euchre for us, and down I flops on my laid-out fire and keeps it dry. And while some of the coves stood dancin' eager and fearful, the others was quiet and the skipper's wife sat lookin' at me with the little gal in her arms sayin', 'Let me see Atkinson make a fire.' And I fair trembled: I own it freely. Then at last a lull came and I set my fire up again arter flattenin' it, and sayin' 'now,' I held my breath and struck a match. And to say what I felt would take a month of Sundays, especial when there was just a little, little spark and the head of the match came off. The heart in me sank and the skipper groaned, and I looked up and saw his missis's white face and the kid wonderin' at the play.

"'There's three left,' said I, 'and if so be any one is wishful for my job he can have it.'

"But no one spoke a word, only the wind howled and the spray came flyin', and the cold seemed greater the higher the sun rose, and now there was a good blink of it among the clouds

and every island and the hills easy to see. Maybe some of you think I'm a hard nut and needs must be to be at sea and nigh seventy, and I'm not denyin' I've been a bit of a scorcher in my time and done things I'd undo if I could, but all the same the toughest of us has times when a soft streak shows, and I'm old enough and ancient enough not to be ashamed of feelin's I'd not have owned to when I was young. So I tells you when I eyed the little gal and her good mother and the skipper and the chaps in shiverin' clumps, suckin' their freezin' fingers and the hope goin' out of them and some lookin' fierce and savage at me for muckin' the first match, there was a kind of a sort of weakness and fear came in on me and to revenge it on myself I cursed them all, hide and horns, for a tremblin' shiverin' set of curs, and came out with blasphemies that would have set a church afire. And the skipper's wife says 'Atkinson, Atkinson!' and I held my peace and a kind of a sort of a feelin' came on me as made me feel kind of big compared with them, as if they was all poor kids and I their bally father, so to speak, though many was older than me. So I said no more and as I knelt again to strike the next match I could a'most have cried to know their eyes on me and they thinkin' then of their homes most like and the Bristol man never to see his. And as I struck with a firm hand, prayin' for a hard heart and courage, I saw the flame and it was just a spurt and no more, and the kindlin' didn't catch and there we were

with two poor matches betwixt us and death. And this I'll say, no one said a word, though I heard them about me catch their breaths and the skipper's wife went down on her knees. I know nought of prayin', but this I'll say, the sight of her made me as much a man as I'm ever likely to be and I cursed soft to myself, and without a word struck the third match and saw it spurt bright flame, and I closed my hands so close about it that they was burnt, and I set light to the paper and fine slivers of wood scrapin's and shavin's, and as I done so a big squealin' squall came and but for me puttin' both hands over the flame it would have been scattered to hell-and-gone. The flame burnt me cruel, but I never said a word and nigh laid down over it, and the skipper and the mates did all they could, and when the squall passed, why, there was the fire and I fed it sweetly with fine wood, and I looked up and saw the 'old man's' missis in a faint, and the chaps cheered, and in a while, still bein' very careful and buildin' up an extra wall of rock, we soon had a furnace goin' that was salvation.

"Well, mates, they said a lot and I'm not denyin' that, but for me and the blisters on my hands, the picnic would have been nothin' to make a song about and none to sing it. And if I spun the rest of the cuffer with the same fullness of jaw we'd be at it till Christmas and the v'y'ge over and us back at home again. But as you may well reckon the point of the yarn was the fire,

and there's great help and comfort in one, and once when I told the yarn to a good missionary, missin' out as much language as I could, he let on the nature of man was to love fire and without it man wouldn't have been. For truly, as one reckons it up, them as came before us must have set by camp fires away back to the beginnin' of the world, and fire is great company as any man knows who has travelled all over the world like me. And this I'll say, that if them dogs of shipowners as toast their shins with fires of our earnin' had the feelin's of men they'd see sailormen had a kind of fire for'ard, a good stove maybe, or they'd so back up the galley and the fo'c'sle with a good dryin' room that we had some comforts, old or young. But when good comes out of a shipowner I shan't be there to see it, and I wish a few had been in Kerguelen with us and my language would have been free. However, enough about them and to resoom. Five days after my 'chievement with the fire we got across to the big island and there rose up an argyment among us as to whether I'd saved them or not. For there was a blighter from Middlesbrough (not but that good men come from there) that let on there was one match left and another man might have struck it and made a fire easy and without goin' about with his hands done up and kissed by the skipper's kid and missis. There's a blighter for you, mates, there's the kind of cove we meets! But there are sailormen as mean as owners and we all know it. I never let

on owners had a monop'ly of meanness. Now seein' as we found a kind of a wrecked hut and some grub of sorts on the big island we was in a sort of way comfortable for castaways, and hoped to be taken off some day and we had a good fire goin', for we'd brought one along with us in the boat in a tin can with holes in it, so the matter of matches wasn't serious and we let the cove strike the last one to see if it was good and when the head came off his nigh did too, for to settle his jaw I punched him good and he went round with his cabeza tied up in a rag, and if the skipper's missis or the little gal kissed him to make it better I never heard of it. And to finish the yarn quick, for it's nigh to eight bells, I may tell you we stayed where we was two months and was taken off by a Government ship, for I always had luck of a sort if living to be old means it. Of that I'm by no means sartin, but still life is sweet and a pipe is good, and if one of you measly jossers would give me a match I'll have another smoke."

"It's a black look-out for matches, for there ain't none. You've smoked them all," said Bob Way.

"What, have I to go to the galley for a light?" asked Atkinson indignantly. "There never was such a measly hooker for matches as this old *Timbuctoo*!"

"Gah'n, not even your old *Bhutan*, what hadn't none?" asked the others.

"None, none?" said Atkinson. "Why,

didn't I tell you that she had a cargo of special ones, fair up to the hatches, millions and millions of 'em? And down she went with the whole damned shoot! By the Holy Poker, that's what narked us, and no wonder!"

THE ONE AND ONLY SPINK

"Look 'ere, what's this eternal guff about Spink?" asked Bob Haines, as the *Ripley Manor*, a steam tramp of some four thousand tons, crossed the line at nine knots, going south. "Dow 'ere is always allowin' Spink was the best and wisest skipper 'e ever sailed with, but 'e don't give us no real yarn about 'im."

"There ain't that Spink's equal in the 'ole Merchant Service," said Dow, mopping his red face with a red bandana, "and I'm 'ere to say so."

"Well, hout with it, young feller my lad," said Bill Walker, "you've told me more than most and I'm 'alf-converted that 'e licks and lays over the 'ole boilin' of skippers."

"Righto," said Dow, "it bein' Sunday and nothin' doin' till four bells, if 'ands is 'eld up I'll spin a cuffer about Cap'n 'Arry Sharpness Spink, wot came from Glo'ster."

Though all hands were unanimous that the yarn was to be spun, Bill Walker, the oldest man aboard, thought it his duty to give Dow a boost.

"A common yarn may be duller than a penn'orth out of a Bethel," said Bill, "and I've 'eard several as made me 'ope the coves wot spun 'em would be struck with dumbness hever

afterwards, but Dow 'ere reely 'as the way of drorin' you on to listen."

Dow, seated on a chest handsomely painted in broad red, white, and blue stripes, of which he said he had robbed a Greek, fairly blushed. At any rate young Harris said so, and being cuffed by Walker was told to guy a Dutchman next time.

"Well then, Spink," said Dow, and paused thoughtfully.

"Good old Spink," said Bill encouragingly. "Give us Spink, Dow! Spink hevery time. On'y you knows 'im and I knows Ward, 'is mate."

"Not fergottin' Day," said Dow, "'im as was the second greaser and an 'oly terror with the dooks."

"Is there fightin' in it?" asked the crowd eagerly.

"Rather," said Dow. "Now, boys, Spink was a wonder and I'm the man to say so. He could talk the tail off a brass monkey, but warn't the common talkin' josser as pumps bilge over you and floods you and fair drowns you with fathead words. But just supposin' you landed on a desert hisland with no one in it but cannibals and 'ad nothin' to eat and was dry as a biscuit and 'ad lost your mates and 'ad no 'ope and then you landed right on a cove, a wonder as to the number of 'is words, but all of them gay-like and dandy, who cheered you up just to look at 'is blue eyes and prob'bly the bottle 'e offered you and with such a nature that the savages took 'im for their old father and offered 'im 'alf-shares

in a shark a month dead and a score of wives, and that this same cove let on you was 'is brother and went 'alves with the sharks and the donas, and that this cove moreover 'ad the clever ways of a dozen monkeys and never lost a stiff hupper lip and made you think, as 'e cursed you in language to make a common stoker cough or a dago say 'is prayers for fear of an earthquake, that 'e meant you well and loved you and 'ad the very 'ighest 'opes of you on earth and 'eaven, why then you'd forgive 'im 'is jaw and say 'e was just like Spink. And moreover, chaps, if you *do* meet a blue-blighted wonder of such a sort, you call 'im 'sir' and 'Cap'n Spink' right off and 'e'll be as good to you as 'e was to me though once 'e knocked me flat for sauce and well I deserved it. Outed me, 'e did, the good little blighter, for the bloke warn't much more'n 'alf my size and I owns it. But down and out I went kerslap and it took a bucket of water over me to draw my senses together. A little more and I'd 'a bin a'most dead, like as I thought a shipmate of mine that I stoushed in Birmingham long ago, a good sort 'e was too and I fair loved 'im, but a row was rose up by a piece we both got stuck on and she not worth the doddle of a foul pipe. And when I outed my pal 'e was as limp as a lady in the Red Sea come July and I was afeard I'd fair perished the pore chap so I rousted out a barrer, and puttin' 'im on it went for the 'orspital not two streets off and outside I met a cop what stopped me."

" ' Dead? ' " said 'e.

" ' No,' said I, ' or my name's Dennis for I laid 'im out myself and I own it freely. Is that the 'orspital? '

" ' Sure,' lets on the bluebottle, ' but no 'urry, old son. If you and me takes 'im in dead there's a guinea for us and if 'e ain't dead though 'e snuffs out next minute not the price of a measly pot,' says 'e.

" For it seems that's the way in that un'oly town. They calls a deader a B.I.D. which siggerfies ' Brought in Dead,' and they 'olds a hinkwich on 'im and the surgeon cove wot tries 'im out to see wot 'e snuffed of gets a wallopin' fee for it, and a guinea goes to the cove that hinterduces the job. ' So 'old on, old son,' says the peeler, ' and take a smoke, for 'e may kick if we waits for a bit.' Now there's an 'oly swine for you, and so I told 'im and I runs the barrer over 'is 'oof and makes 'im 'op and inside my pal come to and it looked as if I'd get nothin' for it. 'Owsoever you never knows your luck. It come out my shipmate 'ad a very rare and 'ighly special complaint and though inside of a few 'ours 'e demanded 'is trousers, they 'eld on to 'em and when I axed about 'im next day a genelman with spectacles on and very keen to look at interviews me and axes me to use my influence with Bill Bright to stay in a while and be looked over by a cove comin' from London especial. I said, as was true, that the on'y influence I 'ad was that 'e was scared of me about a piece, and the doctor

says 'Right oh! you stay outside and I'll get the cove to the window and you can threaten 'is life if 'e comes out,' and I done so and they paid me for five days ten bob a day to come at stated hours and 'owl at Bill when they brought 'im to the window and the peeler wot got a bob or two stood by and said nothin' while I cursed my ten bobs' worth. But arter six says I let up and took Bill out and we was pals evermore, agreein' to chuck the piece that caused the trouble. The reason I tells you this is that it hoccurs to me that if so be Spink 'ad bin brought in dead, 'e'd 'ave resurrected prompt and 'ave run the 'orspital to suit 'imself and 'ad the doctors and the nusses all admirin' 'im.

"Oh, yes, a rare sort was Spink and so was 'is mates. The chief mate was Ward, as Bill Walker says, and the second greaser Day, and they made a three unekalled in the 'istory of the Merchant Service. Spink, as I let on, was little, but 'ard as nails, with a mild eye, mostly, but as cunnin' as a fox and as rare a sailorman as ever spat, with a friendliness that was perdigious and an 'omely way of damnin' a chap's eyes that made us love 'im. And all for the men 'e was, too, no slaver 'e, and no owner's man, though as clever as any monkey at 'is biz. No Jew was in it with 'im and a Scorpion 'e was ready for every time, and a Levantine Greek brought up by a Harmenian was a baby to 'im, though such are special blighters, as you that 'ave sailed the Mediterranean knows. Oh, everybody loved Spink, and

Ward, wot cursed 'im to 'is face and borrowed 'is collars and cursed the fit of 'em, would 'ave sold 'is soul to save Spink's little finger from achin', and Day loved 'im too and refused job after job that would deprive 'im of 'is one and only Spink, that 'e, too, cursed freely. For that was the oddness of the *Swan of Avon*: the terms the old man and the mates was on would 'ave rose up the 'air of a common skipper. You see dear old Spink was the queerest sort of fish that ever swam, and 'e let on that 'e 'ad an unfortnit nature, bein' naturally so fightable that 'e downed everyone 'e could lick and, till 'e thought out a plan, was always outin' 'is mates and gettin' fined for it and not another to be got for fear of a broke jaw or the like. So it seems Spink set back and thought 'ard and came to the conclusion the on'y way was to 'ave a mate and a second greaser 'e couldn't lick, and Day was 'alf a prize-fighter and the best 'alf too and as plucky as a cross betwixt a bulldog and a wild-cat, while Ward, though not so able with the dooks, was six foot two and weighed sixteen stone, and when 'e did get in a crack any common man forgot 'is name for a week. Why, I seen 'im put the gloves on with Day and though Day dabbed 'im where 'e wanted to, Ward at last, more by luck than good management, clipped 'im just one and Day sat up bimeby and asked, most paffetick, wot 'ad 'appened to 'ave Ward fannin' of 'im with a bandana and Spink on 'is knees with a jug of brandy.

"Now I could yarn to you for a month of

Sundays about the things Spink 'ad done, things as was told me by chaps that followed 'im faithful all for love of 'im, though in ways 'e was misfortnit and the *Swan* I was in was the third of that same name. But whatsoever 'is luck 'e always came out on top in the end and, 'is tricks was that clever, though 'e acted simple enough, you'd admire to 'ear. The ship 'e was skipper of was as good as your 'ome and maybe better, and the friendliness in 'er was wonderful, for some'ow not a soul but looked up to the skipper and never took no advantage of 'im. 'E saw to that, but we never wanted to, for 'e was better than any theayter and the movies warn't in it with 'im for unexpectedness. In the fo'c'sle of the old *Swan* we scarce ever talked of anythin' but Spink. She warn't any common old smoke-jack, but a real mooseum with the 'one and only,' as we called 'im, and everything we said turned to Spink and a 'undred yarns came to nothin' owin' to that, and wot 'appened in a cove's last ship warn't thought much of, for we was all lookin' to see what would 'appen in the *Swan*. The older coves wot 'ad sailed with 'im previous, let on that even before the war that same *Swan*, or the one before 'er, was the 'ooker for things to 'appen to. And when the war started and the 'Uns began their blue-blighted perishin' games, the swine, nat'rally enough the hexcitement grew perdigious. For there ain't many skippers wot can keep things goin' on a raft the way Spink done, and 'e 'ad a way with a 'Un, even

when the 'Un was aboard with a bomb, that made 'em civil to 'im. Let folks say what they will there's few skippers can smile nat'ral and real hingratiatin' in such sarcumstances. But Spink could, and 'e'd see the crowd into the boats as if we was goin' on a picnic, for 'e actual done so with me, though the *Swan* warn't sunk arter all, as I'll tell you when I gets agoin' arter this 'ere hinterduction. Don't grouse none at the length of it, for Spink and Ward and Day ain't to be explained in a few measly words, like a common skipper and mates. Mostly I might say there was Cap'n Bilge and Mr Muck the mate, and Tom Tusher, the second, and that would do for 'em. But Spink 'as to be explained and I 'ope I've done it. Spink, good old Spink, was a mortial puzzle at first, but flemished down 'e'd run sweetly, and so you'll see or I'm mistook, for I've got the cove to rights and remember 'is very words. A common skipper can be forgot, but Spink, no, not by a potful! You just 'ad to remember Spink, like as you do the Peak of Tenerife when you see it first 'igh in the 'eavens, a mountain 'alf-way up the golding stairs, as you do old Etna all in the golding dawn comin' up with the Straits and thinkin' 'ard of the un'oly joys of Naples.

"Now this 'ere trip I done with good old Spink was last year, afore the 'Uns shot off their mouths and let on they'd sink the world, but their hacts was bad enough for British seamen as well you know, and already one old *Swan* 'ad

been sunk in the North Sea or thereabouts and the owners 'ad prompt presented Spink with another, for they was under 'is powerful spell likewise, and Day let on that the chief owner's wife was dead nuts on Spink and if a widow would marry 'im by force. This was the *Swan* I was in, and now she's on the bottom somewheres with a few pore blowed-up coves in 'er waitin' for the insurrection to rise up against the 'Uns, for the perishers are without the feelin' of the sea which all true sailormen 'ave. But then she was all right bar not bein' prop'ly armed, there not bein' guns to go round, though 'Uns was plenty. And arter leavin' 'ome we 'ad the best of luck and never so much as seed a perishin' periscope nor 'eard a shot fired till we was off Gib and 'eard 'em practisin'. And we went to Salonica and left our truck there, a blighted mixed lot too, general hell for everybody if it blowed up, though we 'ad grub for the troops too, and lots of Army gadgets I couldn't put a name to. And we left Salonica, gay and lively it was, though nosey with Jews, and sailed in ballast for Bordeaux, 'avin' naval company most of the way till they left us west of Gib, 'avin' other biz though they said they reckoned we 'ad it all clear to Bordeaux River. And as we was steamin' north at the old *Swan's* best lick, Wat Billings that 'ad sailed frequent with Spink come to me private with a 'orrid serious look on 'im in 'is cro'jack eye, though he 'ad but one and that one cross, as I says.

" ' Dow,' says 'e, ' as regards our Spink you're yet a green 'orn, but do you hobserve hanything hunaccustomed like in 'is demeaniour? '

" That was Billings' fashion of guff: the longest words 'e could man'andle 'e laid up and give you toko with.

" ' Why, no,' says I, ' on'y that 'e's seemin'ly more inclined to damn and blast with quiet spots in 'im all of a sudden.'

" ' Ah,' says Billings, noddin' 'is fat 'ead and droppin' 'eavy words on my pore feet, so to speak, ' ah, 'tis a similar like fermenomenon as I've hobserved in the bloke when, accordin' to 'is hopinion of the sarcumstances, there was likely to be a catsastofry.'

" ' A fer—what? ' says I.

" ' A fermenomenon,' says 'e. ' A fermenomenon is a fact.'

" ' Then why don't you say so at first? ' I asks indignant.

" ' I done so,' says 'e, ' but the longer hexpression 'as more signiferation in it. And, not to hargue, 'tis the belief of us that 'as sailed with Spink that 'is mind foresees dreadful things comin' in the most mysterious way. And the signs of it you mentioned, especial the hintervals of calm hin the capting's conversation.'

" And I own I thought there might be somethin' in it, for my father 'ad spots of silence about 'im for days at times and then 'e mostly larruped the 'ide off of me and talked free again. It was when 'e'd bin silent a week that I run away

to sea, arter takin' my mother to the station on the way to 'er sister's where she looked for refuge at such times. And that night I 'ad the second trick at the wheel in the first watch when Ward 'ad the deck and Spink was in the chart-'ouse sittin' mum.

" ' Gorblimy,' says Ward, for these three rum 'uns always acted as if we was blind and deaf and didn't was at all, ' gorblimy, Spink, what the 'oly frost are you sitting there for, never so much as passin' the time of night with a cove, and what's more, lookin' as mis'able as married? '

" Now I do own freely that 'earin' a pore common mate call the ' old man ' ' Spink ' fair dazed me, for whatsoever sort of codger of a capting I'd sailed with, I'd rarely sailed with one that didn't axe for more respect than 'is manners earned 'im. But there, Spink made no more bones of 'is dignity than if it was an old 'at, for all 'e relied on was 'is brain and the known fact that Ward and Day was 'elpless, 'opeless, and 'omeless, like the kids on the refuge bill, if 'e didn't lend an 'and. So 'e spoke quite decent, a'most gentle and dreamy.

" ' I ain't 'appy, Ward,' says 'e, and to 'ear a skipper say the like give me a feelin' as if I was dreamy too. ' I ain't 'appy,' says 'e, ' for I'm sufferin' from a dreadful complaint.'

" To 'ear 'im any common man would cry, but Ward was that 'ard-'earted.

" ' Wot complaint? ' 'e arsts scornful-like.

" ' One you'll never suffer from,' says Spink,

oh, so sad! and though Ward should ha' knowed 'im arter the years they'd sailed together 'e was took in like me and put some sort of feelin' into 'is voice as 'e arsts what it might be.

" ' I've somethin' on my mind, Ward,' says Spink, and risin' up a different sort of guess cove 'e fair withers Ward with a dreadful glance, ' I've somethin' on my *mind*, you mindless brainless sixteen stone of un'andsome mud.'

" Well, I coughed, for I 'ad to, I own it, but they took no more notice of me than if I was dead a week and buried and logged.

" ' Shut it,' said Ward, ' but what *is* on that two and a 'alf-'orse power thinker you're so gone on? '

" ' We'll cop it this trip, I feel it in my bones,' says Spink, and paid no attention to Ward when 'e said ' Take some pain-killer or some poison and don't depress a cove. Ain't the war enough? '

" ' It's a perisher,' said Spink, ' but to lose this 'ere *Swan* would break my 'eart.'

" Now that let in Ward.

" ' Your wot? ' 'e arsts with 'is 'and, the size of a Hafrican helephant's ear, to 'is own listenin' fakement which was the dead spit of a toadstool on a wet tree and of a trooly great size.

" ' My 'eart,' says the old man again.

" ' Your 'eart, you 'eartless, unfeelin', frozen-blooded swab of a man rhinoskeros,' says Ward. ' Why, Spink, you 'ave no 'eart, all you've got is a circulatin' pump, and as to 'uming feelin's you've none of 'em.'

" ' 'Oo was the gal at Salonica? ' arsts Spink, and at that it was pore old Ward 'oo put on the gentle and dreamy look for 'e was a notorious blighter that went dotty about a dona if she said she pined for 'im. ' She must 'ave bin teachin' of you language, Ward, for you're chuckin' it off your chest in a rare fashion. But never mind 'er, there's others at 'ome and Bordeaux ain't empty of calico by no means, if we so much as ever see Cordouan, of which I've my doubts,' says Spink.

" And 'e went on sayin' 'e felt it in 'is bones till Ward damned 'is 'ole skellington and said 'e wished Spink was in a bottle in a dime mooseum or boiled free of meat to see what 'is pore achin' little bones was like.

" They went on more or less that way to eight bells and the chap as took the wheel from me allowed they parted no friends and that Day damned the pair of 'em and said that for a dollar 'e'd fair massacree the two. So they left it at that, no one offerin' the dollar, for the second greaser 'ad times (all accordin' to Spink) when 'is greed got the best of 'im. Spink one day allowed 'e was a rare bird for sugar, sayin' that 'e'd run anywhere for rhino and that for posh 'e'd push into 'ell. And when Day got some wrought up and ragged, Spink allowed that 'e wasn't always mean with it and that some days 'e'd share wot 'e'd robbed a pore blighter of with the very cove 'e'd gone through and even give 'im a bob in the pound to 'elp 'im on 'is way to the 'orspital. My word, compliments flew in the old *Swan*,

and that sailorman Spink (for 'e was the rarest and finest learn'd sailor I ever see) 'ad the mixed tongue of a devil and a hangel.

"The downsomeness of pore Spink got on my narves, and I own I passed on the old man's mournful prophecies to the crowd, but as a matter of fact and truthful 'istory we made Bordeaux River safe as 'ouses, bein' met by a lot of French patrol boats and the like wot said they'd sunk a sub apiece. They're an 'opeful people, but some sobered up now. There are men that don't like 'em, but I do, within reason. I've known the best of 'em and the best are quite good, a'most equal to our mejum quality sailormen. Oh yes, I put G. to their discharge book a'most every time. V.G. would be stretchin' it, but G. will go.

"At Bordeaux we loaded pine pit props or somethin' of the sort and the mate 'e discharged the Salonica dona from 'is 'eart and took aboard a very 'andsome dark piece wot gained 'is fancy by lettin' on she'd knife 'im if 'e looked at another lady. 'E moaned about 'er somethin' dreadful when we sailed, and if a cove 'ad comforted me the way Spink did 'im I'd 'ave 'ad 'is gore in a quart pot or 'e should 'ave 'ad mine. But I'm hanticipatin', for I forgot to state that as props and timber seemed scarce we 'ad space in the 'tween-decks that some'ow looked un'andsome to Spink. And the reason we found out later when at a ridick'lus price, to make a common owner quail, 'e bought barrels of all sorts and,

seein' 'em well bunged, filled 'er up with 'em. Moreover, 'e took in no more fresh water than would do us to Bristol and 'ad three of the water tanks sealed up tight. 'E gassed so mournful that two of us wot was inclined to religion on their off days and believed in prophecies and fortune-tellers and the like, took the blue funks and skipped and we sailed without 'em.

" ' So much the less dead weight,' said Spink, and that trip, for the first time, as Billings let on, we 'ad to go easy with the grub for 'e'd fined things down perdigious till the cook was luny. So we 'oofed it for 'ome fair licks, runnin' straight night times and crooked day times and us cursin' till there was a blue cloud astern thicker'n our smoke at the humilious notion of British sailormen, wot nat'ral owns the sea, 'avin' to dodge about that fashion and us 'alf wonderin' at Spink, in 'is way as proud a man as I ever see, 'avin' the condescenscion to do it. Now if it 'ad bin owin' to a French lot we could ha' stood it, whatever our inside opinion of 'em as sailormen, but to be made to streak the hocean zigzag by a German Dutchman was wot narked us. A dago is a dago, some good, some bad, but sailormen respects those as carries a sharp knife and is ready to be 'ung for killin' a cove wot 'its them, and even a Dutch Dutchman 'as 'is p'ints. A Roossian we could 'ave borne, and of course a Finn 'as to be respected, but when it comes to German Dutchmen why, we knowed 'em from clew to earring and knowed, right to our boots,

wot we'd kicked 'em with, that they was a mean dirty cowardly lot that nat'ral took a back seat till they 'appened to 'ave the pull in numbers (and 'igh numbers they 'ave to be, as we all know) and then they came out in all their nat'ral beastliness and brag. I've seed a dago keep 'is end up with a 'ole crowd of 'orstile coves, but 'ooever saw any Dutchman but a Norwegian Dutchman do the like? Maybe a Swede could, at times, and even a Dane, but a Dutchman from 'Amburg is ever a stinker when unbacked and takes the last dip in the kid when an Englishman weighs in. And to think they pirates acts as they does! Words don't touch the 'eart of the matter as we agreed solemn and in the old *Swan* there was never less cursin' than when we talked of 'em quiet. But we agreed unanimous and all at once that their day would come. And so it will, but not the way they reckons on.

"Now 'tis an odd thing and 'ard to believe, but out of the 'ole crowd includin' Spink and Ward and Day and the engine-room crowd, it was on'y Spink as ever stood up for a German. You'll wonder at that but I 'eard 'im do it, and so did Billings, and they 'ad rare rows over it on the bridge and at 'ashtime. I myself 'eard Spink at the argument and can give you the cove's words, or as near as a toucher. Day got some snake-headed about it and let on that Spink was like the hinconsistent woman in the yarn, for 'e was a smutty dog Day though Spink never, and old Spink argues solemn.

" ' Wot I say is that there *is* a good German,' let on Spink. ' Why do I make that there astonishin' remark? Would I make it on the evidence come out since this 'ere scrap started? Not likely! Would I make it like as if I meant a *dead* German? Hobviously not, for I'm glad to say our brave boys 'ave deaded millions of 'em and gone to sleep the 'appier. No, I says it because I knowed one. 'E sailed with me when I 'ad the *Star of Liverpool*. 'E was second and a decent enough sailorman and good company and respectful and steady and kind-'earted to a degree. And wot's more I saved 'is life,' says Spink triumphant, ' and would I save a common German Dutchman? You know I wouldn't.'

" And then Day fair yells:

" ' You always was as weak as dishwater, Spink, and you done wrong to save 'im. Like as not 'e'll live to do you a mischief. For you to risk your life for the likes of an 'Un! '

" ' I never,' says Spink, ' but I 'ove 'im a rope and drawed 'im up and 'e was as grateful as if I'd dived after 'im, for there was sharks about.'

" ' Brute,' says Day, kind of indignant, ' wot was you hinterferin' with a pore 'ungry shark for and a German goin'? '

" But old Spink took no notice.

" ' I'll meet that fellow again,' says 'e, ' I feels it in my bones.'

" ' Damn your bones,' says Day, disrespectful to a 'orrible degree, ' we're always 'earin' of

your bones this v'y'ge and never before. Wot's wrong with your bones?'

"'Nothing,' says Spink, 'but for twopence I'd break one of yours.'

"'And wot 'ud I be doin'?' arsts Day. 'It ain't Sunday!'

"That was the second greaser's day off for fightin'. Bawdy swine 'e might be, but some'ow he respected Sunday and wouldn't fight on it not even if the old man said bad words of Noocastle where Day come from. And on Sundays 'e made Day want all the religion 'e 'ad, though on Mondays cream wasn't in it with Spink.

"'Yes, I'll meet that cove again,' says Spink very thoughtful. 'E spelt 'is name Goeeth, same as a German writer I've 'eard of, but pronounced different, so I called 'im 'Ildebrand for short.'

"''Ildebrand Goeeth! Wot a name to go to bed with,' says Day. 'If 'e 'ad bin real good 'e'd 'ave called 'imself Smith or the like. But 'e's dead if 'e was good and if 'e wasn't 'e ain't. You'll be sorry yet that you robbed a pore shark, Spink.'

"And the oddness and remarkableness of it all is that Spink did actual meet that same Goeeth not three days later! 'Tain't easy to believe, though equal remarkableness 'appened to me in a bug-'aunted boardin'-'ouse when I slep' in a room with three beds in it, me bein' that squiffy I couldn't ha' seed a hole in a she-oak net, and the other two beds which I'd thought not real

beds when I fust seen 'em was ockipied in the mornin' by two men I knowed and 'adn't seen for years. The three of us never went to bed again for two nights and the third we was together in the calaboose. We *did* 'ave a jamboree!

" Day, you'll see, was a kind of prophet and put it down to bein' religious on Sundays, though Spink, 'oo wasn't religious any day of the week, let on 'is bones did it first, though 'e 'ad to back down to Day in particulars, such as takin' back a statement that Goeeth would rather die than do such mean tricks as sink a British ship and leave men castaways wotever the weather looked like and 'owever far from land.

" 'Twas on the second day out from Bordeaux and in the mornin' watch and we zigzaggin' no end and the sea without a sign of the French or our matlows for that matter, that we seed the blighted periscope of a submarine come up like as if it was a cobra in the grass, and we knowed our names was called for trouble. As I stated previous the *Swan* 'ad no gun, and nothin' bein' seen bar a fog-bank to wind'ard, 'elp was 'ardly to be looked for. 'Owsoever as the perisher came up on the port bow Spink put 'er for the fog and gettin' the 'Uns astern whooped 'er up for 'ell and we all prayed unanimous for more fog. 'Tis a rummy thing, life, and no error, for 'oo'd 'ave believed previous to this scrap a sailorman would ask for fog wot is the seaman's 'orror and worse than any common 'urricane?

But swish-swash, 'eave and roll, that bloody grey sneak happaratus they calls a submarine 'ove 'erself out of the sea and up she come grim and gashly and fair rotten with Germans in 'er un'oly guts. 'Twas but a minute seemin'ly before she opened fire without so much as ' 'Ow-d'ye-do,' and the first shell nigh took my starboard ear off, for I warn't leary, it bein' my first time with the like, and lookin' to see what I could pipe. And the second shell 'it 'er aft, barely missin' some of the steerin' gear, and not bein' able to swim I slips on an odd kind of weskit wot floats a man. I bought it off of a matlow in Salonica wot said 'e'd borrowed it from a passenger that didn't want it as 'e could float without, 'avin' bin deceased days and days and days somewheres in the Artchipelaygo. And shellin' as she done so the sub come after us a rare 'un, doin' better licks than the old *Swan*, that couldn't really beat nine much if she bust 'erself.

" By this time the pigs astern knowed we 'ad no gun aboard and for that matter they mebbe knew 'oo we was and when we sailed, for their artfulness 'as no limits and their spies is noomerous and prob'ly they are 'anded a list of ships that sail by some treacherous traitor, 'owsoever it is done. For a cat and a monkey together can't beat them at tricks. And they 'it us frequent and pore Day 'ad some of 'is cheek took off, a right un'andsome scratch it was, and Ward was 'ighly indiggernant about 'is cap bein' 'oled, and Billings, cursin' 'orrible, nursed 'is arm wot

was broke. Therefore, seein' it was no good and trustin' some'ow to 'is luck, which was notorious from 'ome to the China Seas, Spink 'auled down the proud and 'aughty flag of Hengland and stopped the hengines. 'E let on arterwards that it was all on account of the 'orrible threats Ward and Day made as to what they'd do if 'e didn't, but my kinkle is 'e done it off 'is own, and about as wise a thing, though very 'umblin', as a cove could do. So up came the sea-pigs (men I don't call 'em) and a big chap rose up out of the connin'-tower and in English, as good as I or any of us could speak, 'ailed us to put a boat over the side and pay 'em a mornin' call.

"It warn't the kind of game I liked, but this was before the 'orrible deeds of the *Belgian Prince*, and when I was ordered into the boat I lay low and said nuffin' and done as I was told. Ward and a cove called Bright and two more come along and we rowed to the pig-ship. 'Ow I felt I won't relate, but if my prayers 'ad bin 'eard it would 'ave rained British Navy, and if a 'plane 'ad come over with bombs I'd 'a yelled, 'Let 'em go and don't mind me,' for 'ere we five sailormen, and one a mate, was actual doin' wot we was told to by a German Dutchman and doin' it prompt without back-talk. 'Orrible and disgracious I call it! Well, alongside we comes and three swine gets aboard, a officer and a petty officer and a sailorman of sorts carryin' an ugly thing wot we knowed was a bomb.

"'Back as fast as you can,' roars the officer,

and speakin' to Ward (our mate, mind, and 'im sixteen stone!) 'e says 'Get for'ard, swine!'

"Ward done it with a mottlesome face mighty queer to look at, and he gurgled some. And then 'is nose bled. Arterwards I larned that it prob'ly saved 'is life from apperplexy, which is a very fatal complaint to people with 'ot tempers, and Ward owned a good 'un as we knowed, though decent enough if we jumped at 'is word. So back we goes and the officer says somethin' in 'is own lingo to the petty officer, wot laughed. Now wot I says of the German language is this —to 'ear two talk it in a corner a cove, that didn't know the natur of the lingo, would call the doctor and the stooard, especial the stooard. Wot 'e said I never knowed, but we come to the *Swan* and the three went aboard, the bomb-carrier last and careful not to drop it. And in the meantime Spink 'ad the other boats out and grub and water in 'em. Oh, a thoughtful fatherly man was Spink! Arter the bomb-swine Ward went aboard, still some mottled, and with an 'andkerchief in 'is 'and. And I skipped arter 'im, why I don't know, but somethin' fetched me, and as I got aboard I saw wot seemin'ly no one 'ad noticed, and it was that the fog off the land was comin' down to us with a light heasterly air. And as I put foot aboard I 'eard Spink bellow, in 'an 'ighly surprised tone of voice, that made all 'ands sit up and take notice, 'Ildebrand, oh, 'Ildebrand, is that you?'

"Seemin'ly it was! The good German wot

'e'd shot off 'is bally mouth about, 'oldin' up agin Day and Ward (*and* Ward, mind me!) was this ship-destroyin' swine wot 'ad said contemshus to Ward, 'Swine, get for'ard!' Yes, this was Goeeth and no mistake about it, though 'e'd changed 'is name since, as was hevident when 'e said to pore Spink, wot 'ad stood up for 'im when we knowed nothin' agin 'im:

"'Lootenant Gerter, *hif* you please!'

"Mark me, 'e said 'hif you please,' but there is ways of sayin' it and I'd rather 'ave my eyes damned by an English officer, or a policeman for that matter, than 'ave 'hif you please' 'ove at me that way. And pore old kind-'earted Spink, wot 'ad quarrelled with Day and Ward about 'is one good German, seemed 'orrorstruck and sorrowful to a degree.

"'Don't you know me?' 'e arsts, 'don't you remember Cap'n 'Arry Sharpness Spink of Glo'ster wot saved your life in the *Star of Liverpool*? I'm captain of this steamer.'

"'Then out of it and damned quick,' said Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter.

"'You don't mean to say you're goin' to sink my ship, do you?' arsts Spink, 'and me savin' you from the sharks?'

"Oh, it was paffetick and no mistake, for Spink seemed as if he just couldn't believe it of 'Ildebrand, good 'Ildebrand!

"'Saved my life be damned,' said 'Ildebrand, speakin' as good as you or I, 'you just 'ove me a rope and if I 'ad my way I'd put one round the

neck of every English swine and 'ang 'im and give 'im to the sharks arterwards.'

"Spink did a sort of mournful jig on the bridge and 'twas on'y arterwards we knew 'is game, for at first I thought 'is nose would bleed too or that 'e'd go mad and make a song and dance of it there and then. But, as 'e let on, 'e too saw the fog, and knowin' wot 'e knew, though we 'ad no wireless, so 'e couldn't 'ave called for 'elp as we mostly can now, 'e knew that time was valooable and that mebbe somethin' would turn up, and so it did, for as 'e said arterwards when 'e crushed Ward and Day with various remarks, 'is luck was notorious. I said so just now and true it was it sarved 'im this time! Another cove wouldn't 'ave known Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter of Pigstyland, and wouldn't 'ave bin able to 'owl ' 'Ildebrand,' off the bridge and, not 'avin' saved 'im couldn't 'ave said so, thereby wastin' the 'Un's precious time, for I could see 'Ildebrand, for all 'is bounce and brag and pig-swine talk, was some took aback by the meetin'. Mebbe a well-seasoned common murderer may sometimes look back to 'is time of hinnercency, so I reckon a 'Un wot 'as sailed in English ships may look back to the time 'e was 'alf as good as an Englishman. I don't say 'e'll be sorrowful about it, or think it paffetick, but in 'is bones 'e *must* know wot 'e's lost. I seemed to see a kind of a sort of *Star of Liverpool* thoughtfulness come over 'Ildebrand and the second or two 'e gave away was certain wot Spink played for when 'e

saw I. G. Swine, Hesquire, was on the job and didn't 'ug no memories to 'is 'ardened 'eart.

" ' Into the boats and give me your papers! ' roared I. G. So Spink 'unted for 'em and lost another minute or two in findin' 'em, and 'Ildebrand 'avin' routed out the 'ole engine-room crowd, which needed no toe be'ind to come, though some got it on deck and went mottlesome with it, 'e orders the under-officer cove and the matlow to take the bomb below and put it where it would do most good.

" Now at times when I'm ashore I goes to the theayter if so be I've the proper piece to take along, and I fair loves it when the actin' is good and loud and the drayma is 'ot and strong as West Injia pickles. Not that I don't like love jaw, though stage lovers is mostly too lardydah for me and a lot of time cut to waste when a good plain ' Are you on, Kiddy? ' would stoush the villain's plans which always wants two 'ole acts to get ripe in. But the play I reely likes is the third act play by its lonesome when you're wrought up a'most to madness by the hart of it and for two pins would climb aboard the stage and get six months for knockin' corners off the villain, and just when you pulls off your collar and slips it in your pocket to be ready, somethin' surprisin' 'appens, and wot you thought was the tragicness kind of busts like a Heaster hegg and opens up a new fancy kind of end that beats all hell and lays out the villain cold and stiff, while the 'ero claps the gal to 'is 'eavin' breast and

thanks 'Eaven as 'e does so. In two squiggles of a lamb's tail a catsastofry becomes a triump!

" 'Twas so with us and I won't deceive you. Spink up and did some tall speechyfyin' as would 'ave made a brass statoo shed tears, but 'Ildebrand was a German, and though a German is a shamellian as takes on colours accordin' as to wot 'e sets on, 'is nature was truly German, a 'og when on top and as meek as frizzled bacon in a pan when not on top. If I could give you Spink's words I'd sling 'em at you, but all I remember is 'ow 'e says ' Oh, 'Ildebrand, 'Ildebrand,' and the voice of 'im a fair fortune at the Old Vic and 'is actin' gorjuss. And I. G. snorts and says ' Shut up, man,' and 'e tells the other two coves to carry on in the disgustin' language 'e was born to and startin' to go below to the engine-room, they skips prompt at 'is word, but gets no more than one foot off the deck when the change in the drayma came off like as if the bomb 'ad exploded. But, my gay lads, instead of a bomb 'twas a shell and not from the beastly old sub neither, but from a torpedo-boat wot 'adn't 'ad 'er 'alf length out of the fog before she loosed off with three shells in the air at the same time! And of them shells one 'it the water astern of the swab of a sub and the second clipped off the 'ead of a cove lookin' out of the connin'-tower and the third 'it 'er fair and square as they put the lid on. But up it come agin for another shell opened 'er up like a sardine tin, and down she goes wallowin' like a whale in a flurry, a fair joy

to see so many 'Uns drowned. 'Oo so sick as 'Ildebrand as we cheered and 'oo so glad as Spink, for I 'eard 'im roar out to Day:

" ' You chipped mug from Noocastle, wot did I let on to you about my luck! '

" And Day took it, though sick about 'is cheek and ever rumbumptious about Noocastle where 'e come from. And then pore sick and sorry 'Ildebrand spoke, a diff'rent guess German Dutchman when under-dog, as you may reckon.

" ' Cap'n Spink,' says 'e, quite civil like though sick, ' I suppose we are your prisoners.'

" And Spink looked as black as the Earl of Hell's riding boots.

" ' Put that bomb over the side very smart and prompt,' says 'e, and the sailor chap wot 'ad it done so smart and prompt, though careful.

" ' Dow,' says Spink.

" ' Yessir,' says I.

" ' Take them blokes' guns,' says Spink.

" And I took 'em. I did it civil-like, but spat on the deck, as I done so, to siggerfy civilly and without 'ard words wot I thought of 'em. 'Ildebrand understood it, oh yes, 'e understood it, and I seen sparks in 'im, but 'e knowed better than speak, for at a word I'd 'ave 'oled 'im with 'is own gun! But if I'd done so I'd 'ave spoilt the circus, for Ward comes down off of the bridge, very quiet but deadly like.

" ' Captain Spink! ' says Ward, stern, oh, very stern. ' 'Ildebrand called me swine,' says Ward.

" ' 'E done so? ' arsts Spink, surprised like.

" ' And 'e's my meat! ' says Ward, as savage as savage.

" ' 'Elp yerself,' says Spink. ' The table's laid,' says Spink. ' I takes no truck in 'Ildebrand now. I was fool enough to say there was one good German, was I? 'Tis the on'y thing I know agin my general hintelleck.'

" Now though I guff slow it was all mighty quick, for the t.b.d. was comin' up like as hif she meant to dive for the sub, but I'd no eyes for 'er, for I watched Ward walk up to Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter, Esq., with 'is chin out.

" ' You said to me " Go for'ard, swine," ' says Ward, breathin' short. ' Put up your 'ands! '

" Now would a German 'ave bin gentleman enough to say ' Put up your 'ands? ' Not much! 'E'd 'ave caved in the other cove's cabeza with a belayin' pin when 'is back was turned. There's not a gentleman among 'em, and not a sport, from the Hemperor to an 'Amburg pimp.

" ' Wot do you mean? ' arst 'Ildebrand. Now, mark me, 'e was a big man, as big as Ward and maybe 'arder in a way, for Ward 'ad a stone too much on 'im for the ring and Day frequent guyed 'im for fatness.

" ' I'm goin' to stoush you for them words,' says Ward, and 'Ildebrand backed a bit and seemin'ly looked for a pin or the like, and seein' us about so that there was no 'elp 'e hentered a protest, as Billings let on arterwards, that bein' Billings's way.

" ' I'm your prisoner and I can't fight,' says 'Ildebrand.

" ' Then don't,' says Ward, ' take it lyin' down, swine.'

" And with that 'e let out with 'is left and 'Ildebrand 'it the deck as nice as a cove could wish.

" ' Pick 'im up, Dow,' says Ward, ' pick 'im up ! '

" And very reluctant I done so, for I reckoned 'Ildebrand might bite. And seemin'ly 'e was surprised Ward didn't kick 'im or jump atop of 'im there and then. Seemin'ly 'e 'ad clean forgot Henglish ways. But arter some more words from Ward and my hencouragin' 'im by sayin' I'd kick 'im if 'e didn't make a show, 'e did a rush at Ward and, tryin' to grab 'old, got it socked to 'im proper, though the mate copped a tidy smack on the ear. For that 'Ildebrand got 'andsome returns and went wallop a fair sock-dollager, but risin' because I hencouraged 'im agin 'e did another advance, but bein' met with strong hartillery fire from Ward it was broke up and 'e took cover be'ind the capstan, Ward advancin' on 'im fair 'ot and foamin'. I done my dooty as a second, for by now I felt a sort of hinterest in 'Ildebrand, and gettin' Bright to 'and me an iron belayin' pin I urged 'Ildebrand on. So 'e went in agin and the fightin' was mixed. Accordin' to Day 'twas amatoors hall hover and 'e give Ward a rare talkin' to arterwards for a number of things 'e done and a number 'e didn't, but I counts fightin' by the 'its myself, not by the slim

dodges of it, and 'Ildebrand's 'ead was fairly the German Hemperor's for size afore Ward upper-cut 'im 'alf by accident and fair outed 'im. As 'e lay on the deck I was wishful to hencourage 'im in the ribs, but Spink wouldn't 'ave it and 'Ildebrand surely 'ad enough and when 'e opened 'is port eye, the other bein' closed for halterations and repairs, 'e saw Ward standin' over 'im like as I've seed a steer in Texas look down on a silly-ass lamb as took the steer for 'is ma.

" ' Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter, 'as you 'ad enough? ' arsts Ward, 'opin' 'e 'adn't.

" ' Ja,' says 'Ildebrand, forgetful of English, bein' some dazed.

" ' Say " Yes, sir," ' roars Ward.

" ' Yes, sir,' says 'Ildebrand, still some dazed and with a gulp like.

" ' Am I a swine? ' arsts Ward, ' am I, you pig-dog? '

" ' No, sir,' says 'Ildebrand, quite like a common meek second greaser wot 'as shipped in a Western Ocean packet with a bucko mate and 'asn't minded 'is manners accordin', till told of it.

" ' Good,' says Ward. And with that 'e calls the stooard and the dish-jerker give 'Ildebrand a drink and I shoved a bucket of water afore 'im to wash 'is face. And 'oo so meek as 'Ildebrand!

" Watchin' of this fight 'ad lost me the rest of the drayma. The other coves never so much as touched the blighted matlow, but give 'im a fag. The blighter was fair 'oppin' joyous to be out of the war. But the petty officer cove wot 'ad toed

two of the stokers was played ' no child of mine ' with, and 'e looked a fair pair with 'Ildebrand when they got through with 'im. Then Billings give 'im a fag. Billings was weak, 'orrible weak. And, to my mind, so was Spink. 'E never did a thing to 'Ildebrand, not a single bloomin' thing! 'E didn't so much as speak to 'im agin and never threw it up at 'im that 'e was a low-down ungrateful 'ound, though 'e gave Day fair 'ell for somethin' 'e'd let on about Spink's luck peterin' out. What Spink said was more or less this:

" ' You 'alf-bred prize-fightin' noodle from Noocastle, can you as much as spot an 'ole in a ladder? No, you're as blind as a bat at noonday, you chump, and don't see as I mix luck with brains. Wot did I say ' 'Ildebrand, oh, 'Ildebrand ' for, and be sorrowful-like with the cove, but because I seed the fog to windward and knowed that a minute's time lost in paffetick palaver might bring out my luck, like as it done? Do you think, bacon-head, that I was took flat aback in my mind? Oh, you cod's jimmy from a refuge 'eap, you're on'y fit for cats to yowl over! '

" And Day, sore in 'is mind and 'is cheek, said nothin', not 'avin' the like flow of language with 'is face laid open. And Spink was very joyous and gave us all two tots apiece and talked about 'is luck and through a speakin' trumpet told the skipper of the t.b. all about it, sayin' 'e was Cap'n 'Arry Sharpness Spink of Glo'ster, where good men come from. That was a common

game of 'is and 'e run down Noocastle crool on Sundays as I said before. And very reluctant 'e gave up the three 'Uns to the t.b. for 'e was wishful to show 'em in Bristol, and when 'e sent 'em aboard Ward as went with 'em took a receipt for the owner (as they calls skippers in the Navy) to put 'is moniker to. Wot it said was, so far as I reklect:

" ' Three German 'Uns; one in good condition and one damaged, and Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter, Esq., with 'is starboard optic in doubt, and also hotherwise damaged.'

" The owner signed it all right, and Spink, grousin' at the loss of 'em, said 'e'd no luck. So we 'oofed it for 'ome and arter a while 'e cheered up and bragged gaily. But comin' up the Bristol Channel we was torped nigh up with Flatholm arter all. Disgraceful I call it! But Spink fair crowed. They couldn't sink us, all on account of the pit props and 'is barrels, though the engines bein' put out of whack we was towed the rest of the way to Bristol.

" ' I do 'ave luck,' says Spink, very joyous. ' Why, this makes up for the loss of Lootenant 'Ildebrand Goeeth Gerter! '

" 'E was a queer cove was Spink! "

THE HUT BY THE LACHLAN

It took Jim Grey hard riding to get down again to the River Lachlan from Conoble, away north in the Back Blocks, for it had rained ever since he crossed the Willandra Billabong going north. And now a cold southerly wind blew up with the rain and set him shivering as he splashed through the big swamp on the Inner Road, running along the river from Euabalong to Condobolin.

"Wish I was in Forbes," he growled. "To blazes with the bush in this weather! It's a fine place for those who like it, but now I'm hankering for old England."

As he came out of the swamp he saw ahead of him a swagman whose walk he seemed to know.

"Now where have I come across that bloke?" asked Jim. And slapping his wet thigh, he said:

"My continental! It's the queer cove I met last year on the Uglo Creek."

And presently he drew up alongside the man, who turned and nodded, but at first did not recognize him.

"Aye," said Jim to himself, "this is the cove! I remember the beggar's beard, and those eyes of his, and what Arria Bill let on about him."

"Bill Sadler's lookin' for some one, and I'll

be sorry for the bloody cove when he finds him," was what the Arria bullocky had said.

"What cheer, mate?" asked Jim, when the footman turned round.

"Why, mate," said Sadler with a grim smile, "there's mighty little cheer a night like this. But you and I have met before—somewhere?"

"My oath!" said Jim, "'twas down on the Uglo, a year back."

"Aye," said Sadler, as they went on. "Why, we was camped together for a week, more or less, down on that same creek in weather like this. Good coves, down on the Uglo!"

"Where are you camping?" asked Jim.

"I was reckonin' to camp at the old hut jest along here," replied Sadler.

"Same with me," said Jim. "Hand us up your swag, old son. I'll carry it for you."

And without more said Bill Sadler swung his swag off his back and handed it up to the horseman. They went on in silence for a good half mile, and the dark came down upon them suddenly. Presently Jim spoke.

"You ain't found that cove yet, Sadler?" he asked, almost casually.

"Eh?" said Sadler, starting.

"The cove you are looking for," said Jim, staring at him.

"Oh! him," replied Sadler without looking up, "no, I ain't found him yet."

Jim saw him pull at his beard.

"If I had I shouldn't be hereabouts," he said.

" Not hereabouts, I reckon. Did I tell you anythin' about him, mate? "

" Why, no," said Jim, " it wasn't you. It was him they called Ginger. A long thin cove, working on Arria, driving bullocks, with a tongue as long as his whip."

" Oh! him," said Sadler, " yes, I remember I told him something. I have to at times. The cove I'm lookin' for has a red head too."

" Ginger allowed that it was healthy for the other cove that you didn't find him," said Jim.

But Bill Sadler didn't answer. And Jim Grey repeated his own words to himself:

" Not healthy for the cove! "

It was a way he had of chewing the cud of the things.

And then they came to the bend of the winding Lachlan in which the old hut stood. He dismounted, unstrapped a pair of hobbles from the off-side dee, hobbled the horse and unsaddled him.

" Poor old chap! " said Jim, as he rubbed the animal's nose; " it's not comfortable for you, old son, but there's decent feed and plenty of water."

And he went into the hut with his saddle, his own roll of blankets, and Bill's heavier swag.

" I'll make the fire," said Sadler. " 'Tis the thing one wants a night like this. 'Tis a'most better than tucker. A fire's a good companion, mate. There's many a man in the bush who has no other friend than a fire."

He was down on his knees in the old fireplace, grubbing in the dark for some pieces of half-burnt wood.

"Well, you start it," said Jim, "and I'll go out and rake up some logs."

And presently Sadler had a fire begun, no bigger than a man's hand, yet in half an hour the flames drew up the chimney and the big logs hissed in the falling rain that came down it. By the side of the fire Jim piled a whole heap of small logs, and one or two as heavy as he could carry. He hung up the outside blanket of his swag and set it steaming.

"What tucker have you got, mate?" he asked, as he stood drying by the fire.

"Flour and sugar and tea," said Sadler, "but no meat."

"Well, I've got some mutton but I'm out of bread," said Jim. "I don't reckon to travel with bags, just now."

"Aye, you have been doing better," said Sadler, looking at him. "I thought as much from your rig-out and the horse."

"Only so-so," said Jim. "I'm working for a cove in Forbes. But he's a mean man and I'm full up of the bush. I've a kind of notion that I'd like to go back home—to England."

"I reklect you said as much down on the Uglo," mused Sadler.

"Did I?" asked Jim bitterly. "Well, I'm likely to be spoutin' the same guff for the next ten years, unless I get a mate to keep me to it."

And Sadler looked up at him.

"Some day I'll be back there myself," said he suddenly, "when, when——."

And he paused, staring in the fire.

"Are you dead sure he's in this country?" asked Jim Grey.

"Dead sure," replied Sadler. "I heard of him last no later than yesterday. Coming this way, he was!"

He put out his bags with flour in them and tea and sugar.

"Here, give me your billy. I'll get some water," said Jim.

"Mind you don't slip in," said Sadler. "'Tis a tricky path down to the Lachlan, and the water is deep. But likely you savvy that."

By that time it was dark by the river, and the track was slimy with mud. Just where it turned down sideways there was a very steep bank and Jim almost went over it. When he saw the glimmering pool beneath him, he shivered and climbed down more carefully. He was glad to get back to the warm hut and put the billy on the fire. Then he took off his coat and shook it and hung it up. He unstrapped Sadler's blankets for him and put the wettest one to dry. By now Sadler had his flour poured out on the table and was making dough.

"Damper or Johnny cakes, mate?" he asked.

"The quickest tucker's the best, ain't it?" asked Jim.

"Then Johnny cakes," said Sadler.

They ate and drank their tea almost in silence. But they were both thinking of the same man.

"Every one meets every one along these roads," said Jim to himself. "Here I've met this same Bill Sadler twice. I am always meetin' men I know. We coves wander everywhere. I am gettin' sick of it."

When they had eaten their meal they both filled their pipes, cutting up Barrett's twist and rubbing it up in their hands. Jim lent Sadler his knife.

"I lost mine," said Sadler, "at the very last camp I lost it. I'm sorry I did, for it was a good one, quite a weapon."

"Use mine," said Jim.

"Has the river got a move on?" asked Bill Sadler presently.

"Not a stir," said Jim. "It's only heavy rain east and south-east of Forbes that makes her move. But when she does come down she comes down. I have seen her run a banker here."

"Aye," said Sadler, "I was fair floated out of my blankets one day three years ago. Nigh drowned, I was."

"These rivers drown a few," said Jim. "They drown quite a few."

And Bill Sadler nodded.

"Aye," he said, "and they might drown more who'd never be missed."

When he had smoked his second pipe, squatted on his hunkers by the fire, he said, without looking at Grey, who was then on the bench at the end of the table:

"Did Ginger, him at Arria, tell you anything about—about me?"

He poked himself in the chest with his thumb as he spoke.

"Aye," said Jim thoughtfully. "He guffed a bit, but I don't know whether it was true, mate."

"Oh! Ginger, he knew," said Sadler, nodding. "I told 'im years ago. One has to at times. He's a towny of mine. It's something to meet a towny in this blasted bush. Did Ginger tell you about—about her?"

"He let on about some woman," said Jim thoughtfully, "but I disremember it mostly."

Bill Sadler went down upon his knees and fed the fire with sticks. Presently he said:

"No! You wouldn't remember. She was a pretty girl when I knew her first, mate, and I thought she'd marry me. But she chose the other man and I went off to the States. I'm an engineer, I am, and I worked in steamships on the Lakes, and on the Mississippi. And I heard she wasn't happy, and that he beat her. She'd got a little money, not much. Just a little house property that her father left her. She might have married higher than either him or me. But he took her away from home and the houses was sold. And I found out from a sailorman that he was in Australia, flashing it with a couple of hundred quid. And the sailorman had known him at home and he asked him where his wife was. And what do you think he said, now what do you think, mate, that he said? He let on 'To

hell with her! She and me parted brass rags a year ago in the old country. Whimperer, she was!' That's what he said, mate! And this sailorman asked him where she was now, and where he had left her. And he would not tell him, but he let on she was all on her own. What he said was, 'Serve her bloody well right.'"

There was a long silence, and presently he went on:

"What would you do if it was you and you got him?"

"Kill him," said Jim quietly.

Then Sadler put out his hand and said:

"Shake, mate, shake hands on that."

And the two men shook hands.

Sadler got up presently and laid his dried blankets in the bunk. He took off his coat and then his shirt and stood stripped to the waist, while he dried the shirt before the fire.

"You keep a mighty good body on you all the same," said Jim presently.

"Aye," said Sadler, "I was always a stout man, though grey. But waiting to get even ages a man."

Then Jim saw the muscles of his back ripple and grow rigid. Again Sadler repeated:

"Waiting to get even ages a cove. This beard of mine, mate, was black a while ago, and now sometimes I think it'll be white before I meet him. And then I think maybe there won't be another grey hair in it before I get my hands on him."

He pulled on his shirt again and sat down on the biggest dry log by the fire, and for the first time smiled a little.

"I shall be glad to get back to England," he said, "back to machinery. This country is a fine country for those that like stock, but give me machinery. I'm happy when I hear an old engine pound out her music, mate. It is music to the likes of me. And here only once in a while I get so much as a job of tinkering up an old one. What will you do, mate, if you go home?"

"Blow my cheque in and come out again," said Jim Grey, with a gloomy smile upon his sunburnt face.

"Was it a woman who sent you out here?" asked Sadler.

But Jim shook his head.

"I have not seen one yet that I so much as wanted to buy a hat for."

"There's a lot of 'em not worth the price of one," said Sadler seriously. "But it won't matter when your time comes whether she's worth it or not. You are the kind of a cove that will buy some girl a shop full. You crawl out of this, mate, and get home. If you are the sort of man that is wanted here you'll come back. I shan't. Once an engineer, always an engineer. But I would rather hump my bluey for twenty years, and in the end die like a dog on a wet sack, than not keep after the man I'm looking for."

"I am sorry for him when you meet him," said Jim.

"Sorry?" said Sadler. "Sorry?"

And for a long time he did not speak again. They heard the rain come down, pattering heavily on the tin roof. In some places it came in through holes, and made puddles on the floor. The fire steamed and spat viciously, but it threw out a mighty heat and was very comforting.

"Well, we'll keep a good blaze goin'," said Jim, as he threw some more wood on it. "I'd be narked to be one of the poor blokes who are camped under a box-tree to-night."

"Aye, poor devils," said Bill Sadler. "You're right, mate, we might keep up a good fire. One never knows if some cove might come along wet and hungry. But I'm ready for a doss. Ain't you, mate?"

"Right you are," said Jim. "Let's turn in."

Sadler got into his bunk first. He lay with his head in his hand, smoking his old clay pipe. To Jim, who looked at him in the bright light of the fire, it seemed that he had a fine strong face. But it was hard and lined and above everything it showed a dogged purpose. Jim, who had never had any great purpose in his life, wondered at it. He half opened his mouth as if he wished to say:

"Why don't you chuck it, old son?"

But he said nothing. As well might a man preach against the nature of things, or the rain, or the Lachlan in flood, or the bush on fire. He saw that.

"It's—it's like drink, wantin' to kill a man," said Jim.

Perhaps what was in his mind touched Sadler's consciousness. He reached out and knocked the ashes from his pipe, and looked across to the younger man, who was now in his bunk, and said:

"You see, mate, I've just got to do it. I can't help what I feel. It's here—here!"

He knocked upon his very heart. And with that he lay down.

In a few minutes he appeared to be fast asleep. Jim heard him breathing deeply and easily. For the first time in his life it seemed to the man who was awake that there was something fine in a big purpose. He wished he had one of his own. He felt he was doing nothing for himself and little for other people, and he knew he had seen men, like himself, who gradually became even less, tramps, the merest sundowners. He sighed as he lay down.

Just as he was falling asleep a loud crackle of the drying wood in the fire woke him. It sounded as loud as a gun shot. As he turned over he seemed to hear a cooey in the distance. He wondered whether some belated traveller was looking for a camp; trying to find the old hut, it might be.

"If he came near enough he'd see the fire," thought Jim Grey. And then he really did fall asleep.

When he woke again he had no notion how long he had slept. He was lying with his face

towards the old slab wall. By now the fire should have died down a little, but it seemed to him it was much brighter. It crackled as if new wood had been put on. Suddenly he heard a cough, and turning in his bunk, saw the figure of a stranger squatting by the fire. For a moment he thought that Bill Sadler had got up, finding that he could not sleep, and then he saw that the man by the fire was no one he knew. He heard him speak to himself in a kind of snarl.

"Snorin' swine," said the man by the fire. "Comfortable, ain't they? And they 'aven't left no tucker about. And I'm wet, wet to the skin! Nice country this, ain't it?"

And Jim Grey felt a sudden instinctive dislike of him. But all the same he said:

"Well, mate, if you are wet you can dry yourself, can't you, without wakin' other folk that were wet a while back?"

The stranger turned round savagely. He was a sandy man and heavily built.

"Ow, you're awake, are you?" he said. "'Ave you got any tucker?"

He had the air of one who never gave thanks, but took all things as his natural due. Jim knew that there were two cold Johnny cakes upon the table, but he felt reluctant to say so.

"Johnny cakes," snarled the stranger, "Johnny cakes! Ain't you got no meat?"

"No!" said Jim shortly.

And the stranger shrugged his shoulders, just as though he thought that Jim Grey had taken

what belonged to him. Every word he spoke made him more like those who had ceased to labour and had become parasites.

"What there isn't, you can't have," said Jim. "But there's a fire."

"Aye, and I could burn myself in it if I liked, couldn't I?" said the stranger. "I've come down the river, tramp, tramp, tramp, squelch, squelch, squelch, and 'oles in my boots. That's been the day's work. And I was nigh drowned to-day, let alone the rain. Fell in the river, I did. A little more, and I'd never 'ave got out. Got any bacca?"

Jim threw him down half a fig of Barrett's twist. He picked it up without any thanks but very eagerly.

"Lemme your knife."

And Jim threw him down his knife without a word. Bit by bit the stranger cut a pipeful against his thumb, and rubbed it up in his hands, and then said:

"Why, it's damp, nigh wet."

And suddenly Jim got into a fury. A little more and he would have jumped out of his bunk.

"Then dry it, damn you!" said Jim.

"Ow!" said the stranger, "civil, ain't 'e? That's the kind of cove one meets in this country. I just say, polite enough, that the bacca's damp and he ups and says 'Dry it then, damn you!' Bloody country, this Australia! To 'ell with them as sent me 'ere. I wish I'd never seen some of them as sent me 'ere."

And the more Jim Grey heard the more he loathed the man. He turned away and said:

"Dry up that jaw, and let men sleep. You'll be waking my mate, and if you do that you'll be sorry."

"Sorry," said the man, "I'm to dry up, am I? I'm to dry up. Whose 'ut is this, I wonder? I've camped 'ere before, and maybe I will again. Damn the place! Damn the whole show! Oh! All right, I'll dry up."

And still crouching over the fire he smoked the damp tobacco he had cadged.

Though Jim fell asleep again he slept uneasily and woke very soon. The newcomer was lying alongside the fire wrapped in his blankets. He was snoring heavily, and even in his sleep seemed angry and discontented. He was muttering when Bill Sadler woke up, and turned round to find Jim was awake.

"I had a dream, mate," said Sadler. "I dreamt of—of him, you know. I heard his voice in my dreams. I should know it if I was dead. I remember when he spoke to that poor girl before me, and the way he did it. I got him by the throat. But she put up both her hands to me, and said, 'For God's sake, don't, Bill. Go away! Go away!' When he got his voice back he cursed me, and said, 'You get out of this house, she's my wife.' Did I tell you that?"

"No," said Jim. "You didn't tell me that!"

Then Sadler caught sight of the man camped down by the fire.

"Hullo," he said, "have we got a new mate in the hut, Jim?"

"Aye, he came in a while back," said Jim. "Grousing swine! He wanted tucker."

"Poor devil!" said Sadler.

"I told him there were two Johnny cakes," said Jim, "and he just cursed. Wanted meat, he did! He asked for tobacco, and when I gave him some he said,' Why, damn my skin, it's damp!' "

"Did he now?" said Sadler. "Ah, there's a lot of men on the road like that. What sort of a chap is he to look at?"

"Oh! just sandy," said Jim.

"Sandy, eh?" said Sadler.

"Very sandy," said Jim.

"My man's sandy," said Sadler.

"Yes, you said so," said Jim. "Well, if this is the one you want, you can take him out and drown him. Good-night, old son."

And once more Jim turned round and tried to get to sleep. He never knew whether he did sleep or not, before he heard somebody speaking. It was the man by the fire.

"Them two in the bunks, snorin' and comf'-able, and me on the 'ard ground, steamin' in the damp. Curse the pair of them and every one, every one!"

Once more Jim looked out and saw him squatting by the fire, an ugly gloomy figure, with the blanket over his shoulder, sucking at his now empty pipe and feeding the fire with little sticks. And as the light grew stronger Jim

suddenly looked across to Sadler's bunk. He saw that Sadler was not asleep but was lying rearing up on both hands and staring at the man by the fire. Sadler's face was livid. He did not move. He was like a figure cast in lead. And then Jim saw his big eyebrows work up and down, saw his mouth open, saw him moisten his lips with his tongue. And suddenly he turned his head and saw Jim looking at him. He smiled very oddly and nodded at Jim several times. He held out his right hand and beat down on the air with it two or three times, as if to say, "For God's sake, don't do or say anything, because this man, this man, is mine!" And when he had moved his hand like that he turned to Jim and nodded once more. Then Jim saw him shift his position slowly, very slowly, draw his legs up and lift them over the side of the bunk. The fire grew brighter still, and the man who fed it muttered to himself. It seemed to Jim Grey as he watched that Sadler saw nothing but the man by the fire, and remembered his mate no more. And he who crouched by the flames hunched his shoulders uneasily. It was as if he felt there was some one behind him, looking at him. Suddenly he turned towards Sadler, and Jim watched, wondering, as the two men stared at each other. Jim knew that his mate's eyes must look dreadful, for he saw the other man instantly grow rigid and let the blanket fall from his shoulders. He put down his short clay pipe with a shaking hand, laying it in the hot ashes, not knowing where he

put it. Then Sadler spoke. As he spoke he had hold of his own hands and worked them together.

"Dickson," he said, "Dickson!"

"That's not my name," said the man by the fire. "No, that's not my name!"

"Bob Dickson," repeated Sadler.

"That's not me; I don't know the cove," stammered the stranger.

"You liar!" said Sadler, dropping from his bunk.

And the other man tried to speak, but for a moment could not. He put his hand up to his throat, and swallowed, and then snarled:

"Well, what if I am Bob Dickson?"

"Where is she?" asked Sadler. "Where is she? Tell me."

"Who d'ye mean?" asked Dickson.

"Your—your wife," said Sadler.

"What's she to you?" snarled the other.

"A lot," said Sadler. "A lot! Where is she? Where did you leave her?"

"Leave her? She left me in London," said Dickson.

"You took her little money and came out here with it. I know that," said Sadler.

"That's a lie," said Dickson.

"What is she doing—doing now?" asked Sadler.

"Doing? 'Ow should I know? Go and look for her on the streets," said Dickson.

And even as he spoke he sprang up and got

away from Sadler. Jim saw that he had the knife which he had lent him in his hand.

"Mind, Bill, mind, he's got my knife," cried Jim.

But Sadler was perfectly quiet. He looked in front of him as if he saw no one.

"This hound says I'm to go and look for her —on the streets! My little girl, my little girl!"

And then he turned towards Dickson, who shrank away.

"Stand back," he said thickly, "or I will put this knife into you."

But even as he spoke he went round the little broken table which stood on stakes driven into the earth. Sadler followed him. With his eyes still upon Sadler, Dickson felt for the door, and turned and jumped through it, with Sadler after him. And even as they went, Jim cried out:

"Oh! Bill, Bill!"

For he knew what was in Sadler's mind. He sprang out of his bunk and ran barefoot after them into the rain and the darkness, which was now lighted faintly by the moon in a broken space of windy sky. By its light he saw the two men like two dark shadows running towards the river. And Jim called out:

"Mind the river, Bill, mind the river!"

Then he lost them in the thick and crackling brush. But he knew that his mate now had hold of Dickson, for he heard him scream:

"Lemme go, or I'll knife you!"

But he heard Sadler laugh. Then they were

down upon the ground together. Jim heard them fall, although he could not see them. He rushed through the tangle of the scrub and was thrown down by the exposed root of a gum tree on the very verge of the river's bank. He saw the two men rolling over and over and writhing. He heard Dickson scream.

"Oh! Bill, Bill!" cried Jim.

And then both of them went over the bank. He heard another cry and a heavy plunge into the deep quiet waters below. He found the path and slipped down it and, coming to the edge of the water, almost fell in. And then he heard some one swimming. In his hand Jim found he held a heavy club of gum. He heard himself say:

"If that's Dickson that comes up, I'll kill him, I'll kill him!"

So he cried out:

"Who's that? Is that you, Bill?"

And even in the darkness he knew it was his mate. He held out the stick to him and helped him ashore.

As he did so he saw the water, three or four yards from the shore, broken by something else rising. At that moment the full moon shone clearly. There was a hand above the surface of the stream, which grasped at the empty air. Then he saw it sink, as if the man who held it up had been drawn down by something in the depths of the silent river.

And Sadler sat down in the slimy mud and sobbed to catch his breath.

"He's gone!" cried Jim.

"Aye, he's gone," said Sadler. But he spoke very, very quietly.

Together they climbed the steep and slippery bank. Now Jim was the stronger, for even when they reached the level ground Bill Sadler leant upon him. And so they came to the hut. Bill sat down heavily on the little bench alongside the table and laid his head upon his arms. The water ran off him in a pool upon the ground.

"Did he cut you?" asked Jim, who was shaking.

But Bill shook his head.

"Get your things off and lie down," said Jim.

He helped his mate to strip, almost lifted him into the bunk and covered him with all the blankets they had. Then he fetched more wood and built up a big fire and set the billy to boil again. He took his mate's things, wrung them out and hung them up to dry. And Sadler sometimes sighed. It seemed as if he was very weak and tired. Jim went over to him and took him by the hand but did not say anything. Bill Sadler raised his eyes and smiled a little wanly and nodded and jerked his head sideways in a curious manner, as if he was thinking and could not speak. And soon he actually slept.

But Jim could not sleep. He sat by the fire and smoked all night till the early morning, which was clear and fine. With the dawn Bill woke up and Jim saw that his eyes were steady again and filled once more with a purpose, a purpose that was

sweeter to his mind. The two men looked at each other and nodded a little shyly as it seemed. And Jim went out and filled the billy from far up the rising stream, and came back and made tea for both of them. After they had drunk it, Bill said:

"Jim Grey, I'm going back to the old country, to London, my son. You spoke of going back. Will you come?"

"I'll come," said Jim.

And presently the two men rolled up their swags and set out for Forbes. Jim didn't ride but led his horse. It was now a splendid day, for the clouds and rain had passed. The sun was burning. They walked five miles without either saying a word. Bill Sadler seemed in a dream. But presently he spoke.

"It's mighty hot, mate!"

"Aye, as hot as hell!" said Jim.

"Lend us your knife," said Bill, taking a fig of tobacco from his pocket.

"My knife, mate?" said Jim, as he looked straight ahead of him. "Why, that bloke had it. I—I thought you got it from him."

"Aye, and so I did," said Bill with a start as he came out of his dream.

"Then where is it? Did you leave it at the hut?" asked Jim. "I'll ride back for it."

Bill Sadler didn't answer for a moment as he walked on. But at last he spoke.

"Don't go back, sonny, you'd never find it. Dickson got it again—deep!"

From "The Madonna of the Beech Wood"

A CASE OF HAVE TO

TOM ARBUTHNOT was a problem to his parents and a weariness to every one else. He believed he had come into the world for amusement, and he failed to get it. His father was there to find money and his mother to make excuses. Colonel Arbuthnot might have forgiven him if he had succeeded in anything, but he played golf badly, shot worse, and when he tried polo lamed his ponies and battered his opponents, to say nothing of his own side. He wanted everything without working or paying for it. He would do nothing for himself or for the country. He said he hated the Army, loathed the Navy, and had no use for the Diplomatic Service. He was a long, thin, lanky loafer, and showed every sign of becoming something worse. His age was just twenty-one and his favourite subject was his health.

"What I'm to do with Tom fairly beats me," groaned the Colonel. "His mother spoiled him while he was young, and now when she's got some sense it's too late."

His friends said sternly that Tom ought to be made to do something.

"I wish you'd try it," said Tom's father despairingly.

"Give him an allowance and turn him out,"

said a stern parent who had two sons remittance men in California.

"Get hold of somebody who has some influence over him," said another friend.

"Nobody has and nobody ever will have," returned the hopeless warrior.

And then somebody proposed that he should send the boy abroad with a bear leader. But though he had the bear, the ideal leader was hard to discover. The Colonel decided to take advice from a friend in Harley Street.

"Find me the man I want and I'll pay him anything you like," he said to Dr Curzon. "You tell me that there's nothing wrong with Tom physically, except that he's undeveloped and physically slack. But he's irremediably selfish and thinks the world was made for him. What can one do? Can you find me the right man? A chap who lives down our way said, 'Take him out to Western America and make him shoot bears and live in the open air.' He thought a healthy life might bring him to his senses."

And Dr Curzon nodded.

"I'll find you the man," he said, "if you will give him absolute authority to do as he chooses."

The Colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"If he can make something out of nothing," he said, "that's all I ask. A little more and Tom will refuse to get up in the morning without being carried to his bath. He won't even shave himself, and my man has to put his boots on."

"Come and lunch with me to-morrow," said

Curzon, " and I'll bring my steam-roller with me."

" Your steam-roller? " said the Colonel.

" To flatten out your boy," said Curzon.

And on the morrow the Colonel met the steam-roller at a big West End restaurant.

" Let me introduce you to my friend Dr Briggs," said the Harley Street physician.

Briggs was not a big man, but he was very broad and obviously strong. He had very shrewd, rather deep-set eyes, and if a good jaw really denotes determination, there was no more determined man in town. He ate his lunch with determination, and until he had finished it declined to speak. But when it came to the coffee he spoke to the purpose.

" Colonel Arbuthnot, I understand from Curzon that you want me to take your boy out to the West and try to make a man of him. Is that so? "

" That is so," said Colonel Arbuthnot.

" I am to do just what I like with him? "

" Whatever you please," said the Colonel firmly.

" There's nothing wrong with him physically, Curzon, is there? " asked Briggs.

" Nothing," replied Curzon. " He's quite sound and fairly healthy, but slack and thin and morbid, and stones under his proper weight."

" I'll have a look at him," said Briggs.

" You mustn't look as determined as that," said Curzon. " If you do you'll frighten the boy."

But Dr Briggs sniffed.

"Even yet you don't know me, Curzon," he said. "I can be as mild as milk; I can be milder than milk. If you like you can be present and you won't be able to differentiate me from cream. I shall lay myself out to get hold of this young fellow. I'll make him think I'm the most amusing and pleasant and weak-minded person in the world. He will probably go to his pals and say he can wind me round his finger."

"Can you really do all that?" asked the Colonel; "from the look of you I should hardly think it possible."

"You don't know me either," said Briggs, smiling. "I've been at this game for years, as Curzon will tell you. Of course I have had failures, for you can't make a man out of a monkey. But I maintain we are all of us very much the creatures of our environment. I'll be his environment, and when I cease to be I'll pick him one. You bring him along."

Two or three days later Mrs Arbuthnot persuaded her son to escort her to London. She wanted to see Dr Curzon. And the next day Curzon took Tom out to lunch.

"A very jolly friend of mine may turn up," he said. "He's been everywhere, done everything, seen everything, and he's one of the kindest and best men you'll find on the earth. I think you'll rather like him, in fact I'm sure of it."

And Tom did like him. During lunch he told

him all about his health, but before it was over he was listening with open mouth. Briggs told him stories of every part of the world and all the people in it.

"I get on with everybody," said Briggs mildly, "even the savagest tribes. If you treat people as they should be treated they take to you at once. Have you ever done any shooting, Mr Arbuthnot?"

"Only birds, you know," said Tom.

He might have mentioned one gamekeeper, two friends of his father's, and about six pointers.

"Oh, birds!" said Briggs rather contemptuously. "I wish you were coming with me to Western America. I'm going there next week. It's a beautiful country. I'm going to do myself well too."

He was going to do it at the Colonel's expense.

"I've got three or four hired men waiting for me, one a real old hunter. There'll be plenty of sport and a jolly good camp. All I want is another pal with me. I suppose your father wouldn't let you come, would he? Of course, it would cost a good deal."

"I don't think he would," said Curzon, intervening, "and I'm quite certain Mrs Arbuthnot wouldn't."

"Wouldn't she?" snorted Tom, falling into the trap. "If I wanted to come I just would."

"Oh!" said Briggs, "I shouldn't like you to go against your father or your mother, so don't let us talk of it. I've got another man who can

afford it. I'm going to see him this afternoon. And that reminds me, we have been sitting here talking for ages. You see you and your young friend are so jolly entertaining, Curzon, that I really forgot the time. By Jove, I must go! Well, good-bye, Mr Arbuthnot. I hope we'll meet again some day, and if ever you want to go big-game hunting you just speak to your father. Dr Curzon will tell you all about me, what a scoundrel I am, and all the rest of it, you know."

And with that Briggs shook hands and went away.

"Awfully jolly chap that," said Tom, with a superior air.

"Not bad," said Curzon casually, "and very easy to get on with. I could tell you stories about him from now till midnight. A great man for big game."

"I've often thought I'd like to kill something big," said Tom, "if I were only strong enough."

"Oh! you mustn't think of it," said Curzon. "It would upset your mother frightfully. Think of your duty to your parents!"

"Dash my duty to my parents," said Tom. "If I want to go I shall. You as good as said I was much better. I shall tell the guv'nor to-day. I really think I will go with Briggs. I always did want to see things, you know."

"I never heard you say so before," said Curzon.

"Oh! haven't you?" said Tom. "Well, if I haven't said it I've often thought it."

When he went home next day with his mother, he walked into the smoking-room, stood up against the mantelpiece, and said:

"Look here, guv'nor, I'm sick of this. I am going out to Western America with Curzon's friend Briggs."

"Oh! no, you're not," said his father.

"Oh! yes, I am," said his son.

"Your mother wants you at home," said the Colonel sternly.

"And I want to go abroad," said Tom.

"You're a selfish young dog," said the Colonel, "but you can go and be damned."

And on this agreeable basis it was arranged. For his mother, having talked it over with Curzon and also with Briggs, raised every possible objection and cried bitterly. Thus she made it absolutely certain that Tom would stick to his intention.

Without doubt, the preference and liking shown for him by Briggs flattered Tom immensely. They went about in London together for a whole week, and Tom actually did tell one of his particular pals, who revealed the conversation to the Colonel, that he could wind Briggs round his finger. And indeed it seemed that he could, for Briggs did almost everything that he suggested. In the matter of the outfit Briggs had some difficulty in dissuading Tom, whose ardour was extreme when money was to be spent, from buying a battery sufficient to slay all the game in Africa, to say nothing of America.

They started for New York inside of a fortnight after Briggs had first heard Tom's name. Mrs Arbuthnot wept till the tickets were bought and his father damned his eyes for an ungrateful dog, thus keeping him up to the mark.

Tom told Briggs his parents were an unenterprising lot. He often wondered how it was the old man had ever been a soldier.

"All parade ground, I expect," said Tom contemptuously. "Thinks of nothing but his comfort."

"Ah! they kept you at home too long," said Briggs, "it was good of you to stand it. No doubt your health requires care. But, of course, there's a point where one's duty to one's parents comes into conflict with one's duty to one's self."

"Of course there is," said Tom.

On the whole Briggs was glad Tom did not suffer from sea-sickness. It gave him a certain sense of pride when he saw other people incapacitated. But his freedom from this common ailment left him at liberty to gamble in the smoking-room. There he was introduced to the quiet domestic game known as poker, and lost twenty pounds the first day and thirty on the second. Before they reached Fire Island he had been skinned of all his ready money. This was done not only by a common sharper, but also by Briggs himself, who had his own purposes in view. The doctor was a far-seeing man. He sympathized with Tom and said he had had very bad luck, but to encourage him told him that

there were signs that he would some day be a great hand at poker.

"I wish I was a good player myself," said Briggs.

As a matter of fact Briggs knew more of poker than of pathology, and as much as he did of the psychology of a young megalomaniac. In the small hours of the last morning before they reached the Narrows, he played the swindler who had robbed Tom, and got the money back with a great deal more than interest. And then he took his opponent aside, and said:

"If you live for a few more years, and play poker hard, you will know as much about it as I did when I was nineteen."

But he told Tom that the poker-playing gentleman had cleaned him out. It was therefore necessary for them to go straight to their destination without tasting any of the flesh-pots of New York.

"New York," said Briggs, "is an extremely dull place after London. It'd give you the hump. There's nothing doing, and it's very moral, almost puritanical. We'll keep it till we come back from the West, Tom."

"Oh! very well," said Tom, "but I always thought New York was said to be lively."

"Only financially, only financially," said the doctor.

As they travelled West, Briggs instructed his victim in the ways and manners of Western Americans.

"They are a bit apt to trample on strangers who don't hold their end up," said Briggs.

"Are they?" asked Tom. "Do they like Englishmen?"

"They admire them immensely," said Briggs, who knew very well that any Englishman had to prove himself in the West before he was considered a man.

"What are their manners like?" asked Tom. "I have heard people say they are very rough."

But Briggs shook his head.

"That's a misunderstanding. On the outside they appear to be. They're essentially courteous, considerate, and confiding. They have a great respect for birth, Tom, and the one thing they lament in America is the want of an aristocracy. Of course, people will tell you the exact opposite, but don't you pay any attention. That's their humbug. They grieve they haven't a nobility."

Thus, in the course of three days' travelling, Tom was instructed in the nature of those with whom he was to spend some happy months. The fact that he was the scion of a noble family ensured him the respect of all who dwelt in the Rocky Mountains. If any unlikely contretemps happened, such as a conductor addressing him as "young feller," Briggs assured him that that was the custom of the country and equivalent to the common adulation of an English guard. When a hard-headed old moss-back collogued with them at a wayside station, where they had been delayed by a wash-out, and told them that

he had a low idea of the English, and that his opinion of them was mean to a degree, Tom's hackles rose, but Briggs put his powerful hand on his shoulder and whispered in his ear:

"This, my boy, is a common type of madman in the West; you must treat him as if he was perfectly sane."

When they were again safely in the cars, Briggs said that there were some whose envy of the superiority of the English was so great that it put them off their mental balance. And Tom said he quite understood that. His sense of his own superiority grew hourly, and the doctor encouraged it. But Briggs said to himself:

"Pride comes before a fall. I believe I am on the right track."

Within a week of their arrival on the Pacific Slope they were camped in a valley of the Rockies. The party consisted of Briggs and Tom; a quiet and solid old hunter, whose name was Gibbs; a hardened youth from Colorado, with a humorous and satiric eye, known as the "Kid"; an old cockney, called Smith, who had been on the Slope for many years, and a half-breed, whom Briggs had known in British Columbia. Before they went into the hills, Briggs had a talk with these men. What he said was:

"Look here, we're going hunting with a young fellow I've brought from England. I want you to say nothing and saw wood, so to speak, when he shoots off his mouth. Don't forget it's a medical case, and I'm out for a cure.

You mustn't mind his manners, because he hasn't got any. Just grit your teeth and be good till I give you the word. I'm going to make a man of him. He's really sick, but as full of himself as a bull moose when he's feeling gay, and he knows nothing. I'm going to teach him, and maybe you can help me. When he's made to work and weighs near two hundred pounds you'll think I've worked a miracle. Will you take on the job?"

And the Kid, when he laughed and said, "Anything to please you, doctor," answered for the crowd.

So long as the weather was fine and the feeding good Tom Arbuthnot almost enjoyed himself. He often forgot to talk about his digestion. He regarded himself as the chief of the party. The more self-assertive he became, the milder Briggs grew. Even the silent old frontiersman remarked on this. But Smith, the cockney, said:

"Hold on, Gibbs, there'll be a circus presently or I'm a sucker!"

The men found they had a lot to put up with. It was not so much what Tom said or did as what he didn't do. He wouldn't do anything. He loafed about the camp and smoked himself black in the face. Occasionally he went out, fired a shot or two, missed everything, and came back and groused. He sniffed at the men's manners, at their ways, at their language. He often corrected their faults of speech and told them they didn't call things by their proper names. They

went to Briggs and said a little more and they wouldn't be able to stand it. But Briggs replied:

"Boys, remember our bargain. You don't know what's going to happen, and I do."

As Tom got more and more bumptious he became frightfully rude to the doctor, and at last said:

"Look here, Briggs, who's paying most for this? I and my father, or you?"

This was said at the camp fire one night, and there was a dead silence save for a kind of strangled groan from the Kid. But all Briggs said was:

"All right, Arbuthnot, have it your own way."

Nevertheless, nothing disturbed the doctor's good humour; he came up in the morning as cheerful as a chipmunk. He encouraged Tom to tell the camp all about himself and his health, about his father, about his noble ancestors, and about the money that the family possessed. The boys listened in dead silence, but they wished they knew what Briggs had up his sleeve. They yearned for Tom's downfall and wondered how it was going to be engineered. The next day after the row with the doctor, Tom went out with Gibbs, and after missing three excellent chances, said it was the old hunter's fault. And Gibbs, who had hardly spoken the whole day, at last opened his mouth. What he said was:

"Look hyer, boy, the trouble with you is that you reckon you kin shoot and you cayn't shoot; you cayn't shoot for sour apples, my son."

And Tom turned on him and gave him the sack there and then. But old Gibbs only stared at him and laughed silently.

"Don't you dare laugh at me," said Tom.

And the unrepentant Gibbs, forgetful of Briggs' injunctions, said:

"What else can I do when I look at you, sonny, and hear you shoot off your mouth?"

Briggs patched up a difficult peace that evening, and when Tom was asleep in his tent he held council with the others.

"Doctor, this cayn't go on," urged the Kid. "He called me a silly ass this very day. A slab-sided hoosier like him to call *me* a silly ass! Ain't it time we jest told him what we think of him?"

"It's coming," said Briggs. "What did he say to you, Smith?"

"Oh! me, sir," said Smith, "'e allowed I couldn't cook for 'ogs, that's what 'e let on. And 'e says 'ere you,' and 'now then,' and 'urry up,' as if 'e was God A'mighty and me no more than a crawler. I'd give a month's pay to be let punch 'is 'ead."

And Briggs laughed.

"Do you think it'd do him good, Gibbs?" he said to the old hunter.

And Gibbs shrugged his shoulders.

"What me, doctor? Ain't I out of it? Didn't I get fired the other day on Baldy?"

"When are you goin' to let us tell 'im what we thinks of 'im?" asked Smith eagerly, "oh! when?"

"I don't think it'll be long," said the doctor. "I hoped to do without it. I thought the boy might have panned out better, but if he doesn't behave more like a man you can say what you like the day after to-morrow."

"And if that doesn't work?" asked the Kid.

"I've got a plan," said the doctor.

"Give us a pointer, sir," urged the Kid.

But Briggs shook his head.

"It'll keep, sonny, it'll keep."

"My notion," said the Kid, "is that a son of a gun like that ought to be slung out on his own. This is a comfor'ble outfit, this is, plenty of hash and everythin' a man wants 'cept this young cayoot. Look at him and the way he rigs himself out! Why, his clothes make me sick. Them knickerbockers and them ribbed stockings! Oh! he gives me the pip. Last out o' the blankets and first at the grub pile is his motter. And the voice of him too! Oh! listen to him, the toney way he chins, the bloomin' blasted Englishman!"

"I'm an Englishman, Kid," said Briggs.

"Well, you may be," said the Kid, "but you've got over it."

"Have I?" asked Briggs, with a smile.

"Clean," said the Kid earnestly; "ain't he, Gibbs?"

And Gibbs nodded approval of this tremendous praise.

"Englishmen," said the Kid, desiring to develop the subject, "mostly reckons to know a dollar's worth on the total expenditure of one

red cent. They comes loafin' about in this country, sayin' ' Haw,' and ' Heear,' and ' I say,' as if they owned the whole goldarned Slope. They looks at us kind of contempshus, not savvyin' what we think of 'em."

" You make me very humble, Kid," said the doctor.

" There's no need for you to be," returned the Kid warmly. " You're just as good as an American. There isn't a man in the camp that wouldn't say the same."

" Thank you," said Briggs, " thank you very much, Kid."

" That's all I've got to say, but I own I'm lookin' forward to the day a'ter ter-morrer," said the Kid, " when I can turn my tongue loose on the derned sucker yander. If he says too much to me, doctor, may I plug him? Oh! do let me plug him! "

" Not unless he hits you," said the doctor.

" Oh! I'll see that he hits me," said the Kid. " If he doesn't he'll be the first man that hasn't tried to when I've turned my tongue loose. I've got a gay, good tongue when I let it go. You bet I've seen them dance! I should say so! My tongue's as good as dance music."

" Well, we'll see what happens," said Briggs.

" 'E let on to me 'e could box," said Smith, scornfully. " Can 'e, boss? 'Ave you ever seen 'im with the gloves on? "

" Never," said the doctor, " but he's getting a bit stronger than he was. He's got the makings

of a tough man in him, if I'm on the right track."

It was curious how wrong things went the next day. Tom's pony was lame. This, possibly, the half-breed could have explained. A piece of string or deer sinew tied tightly round the fetlock and hidden under the hair, will make any horse lame without doing him any harm. The coffee at breakfast was villainous and the beans were of an appalling saltness. Tom's temper rose rapidly. He emptied his coffee into the creek, hurled his plate of beans after it, and said:

"If things can't be done better I shall quit."

Nobody said a word, not even Smith.

For the first time, Tom was the earliest to be ready to get off the camp, but when he wanted Gibbs to accompany him, the old hunter looked at him with a lack-lustre expression and said:

"What, me? Oh! no, Mr Arbuthnot, not arter what occurred a while back. If you hanker arter shootin' I'll put you up a large mark fifty yards off, on them rocks, and larn you the use of a rifle."

Tom turned in a sudden fury to the doctor.

"Look here, Briggs, I've had enough of this. You sack this fellow."

"He shall go to-morrow," said Briggs quietly, "or, at latest, the day after."

"Well, you see he does," said Tom. "Who's paying for all this I should like to know?"

And with that he put his rifle on his shoulder and left the camp.

"'E's a dear boy," said Cockney Smith. "I love 'im! 'Ow 'is parents must love 'im too! What did you bring 'im 'ere for, boss?"

"To educate him, Smith," said Briggs.

"Eddicate 'im," said Smith, "eddicate 'im? Oh! my word, I wish I 'ad 'is eddication in 'and!"

And the Kid smiled.

"We'll start it ter-morrer, Smith, the doctor said we was to start it ter-morrer. If I ain't allowed to take a hand in that young sucker's eddication ter-morrer, I'll do the same as him. I'll just rise up and say 'I cayn't stand it no more, I'll jack up the whole show and pull my freight.'"

Gibbs and the doctor came back in the evening with two bears and a goat. Tom's jaw fell, for he had come empty-handed.

"Why can't I get anything?" he demanded.

And Gibbs said:

"Do you wish to know, Mr Arbuthnot, why you cayn't do as well as the doctor and me?"

"Yes!" said Tom angrily, "I do wish to know. It's my belief you're keeping it all to yourselves."

"Oh! no, Mr Arbuthnot, sir," said Gibbs. "It's becaze you cayn't shoot. It's becaze you ain't the least notion of still-huntin'. You walks through the woods as proud as a buck elk. You coughs and you sneezes. You treads on dead timber and generally behaves as if things was deaf. But, sonny, things ain't deaf, nor blind, nor fools. That's why you cayn't get nothin'.

That's why you prob'ly never will get nothin'. Me and the doctor here has tried to larn you the last ten days, but you ain't larnt nothin'. Mr Arbuthnot, you never will larn nothin'. You couldn't shoot a rat in a barn, unless you cotched him in a trap first and loosed off at him with a double-pronged scatter-gun, with a handful of buckshot, at about one yard's distance. That's my tum-tum, and now you have it."

Tom turned round and went straight into his tent.

"Gibbs," said the doctor, "I've known you ten years, and I don't think I've heard you say so much in all that time as you've said these last two minutes!"

And old Gibbs scratched his head.

"A man gets wrought up at times," he said, "at times he gets wrought up."

It was not a happy camp, and yet Smith and the Kid sang after dinner and seemed joyous.

"I'd be fair delirious with joy," said the Kid, "if ter-morrer was here. Ter-morrer is what I looks forward to. Ter-morrer is my joy-day!"

And Tom, who was sitting sulkily within three yards of him, wondered what he meant.

"I'm dead feared I'll die before ter-morrer," said the Kid, "that's the way that things take me. I look forward with fear when happiness is on the wing. That's my nature."

"What are yer lookin' forward to, Kid?" asked the cockney, grinning.

"To turnin' my inward self loose," said the

Kid, " that's my joy! I feel as if I'd been tied up and cinched as tight as if I'd been diamond-hitched on to a mewel. But ter-morrer is the day of liberty. Oh! give me liberty or give me death! "

That night the doctor sat by the fire smoking till it was quite late. Before he turned in he went to the men's tent and spoke to them.

" Look here, boys, I don't want you to say anything to Mr Arbuthnot to-morrow that he could take objection to, unless he makes trouble. Do you understand? "

And they said they savvied. But the cockney whispered to the Kid:

" Say nothin'; oh! I'll say nothin', Kid, but the boss never said nothin' about the corffee. 'Ow do yer think, Kid, a dollop o' salt would go in corffee? "

The Kid knew perfectly well how it went next morning at breakfast.

" Oh! Lord, I'm poisoned," said Tom, as he spluttered and spurted the coffee all over the place.

" Why, what's wrong with my corffee? " asked Smith.

There was nothing wrong with his or anybody else's except Tom's.

" If yours is wrong it must have been an accident," grinned the Kid.

" Accident be damned," said Tom. " I believe you did it on purpose, Smith."

" What, me do a thing like that a-purpose? " said the aggrieved cook, " and me a cook! "

WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

"You aren't a cook," roared Tom, "and, what's more, you shan't cook for me any longer."

"For you," said the cockney, suddenly, contemptuous. "I ain't cookin' for you, my son, I'm cookin' for the doctor."

"Don't you dare say 'my son' to me," said Tom furiously.

As he spoke Briggs rose and walked out of the camp and never looked around, but strolled up the creek with a pipe in his mouth. They saw him out of sight. And then the Kid rose up.

"No, Smith," said the Kid, "don't you dare to call Mr Arbuthnot 'my son.' You ain't respectful. Just think what a fine chap he is! Cayn't he shoot just and cayn't he hunt, and ain't he rich, as he's always tellin' us? Think of his father and his grandfather what's a earl. How the girls must love him! Don't you call him 'my son,' Smith. You leave him to me. I'm just aworkin' myself up to tell him what I think of him. I'll tell him a whole lot when I get warmed to it."

But he never got a chance of warming to it that day, for Tom, whose temper was completely done, rose up and went straight for him. The ingenuous Kid was taken unawares, Tom's fist got him between the two eyes, and down he went.

"Wotto! A rough 'ouse!" said Smith.

And truly it was a rough house. The Kid rose from the ground almost before he got there and grabbed Tom. Down they went again and

rolled right over the breakfast and across the fire. A large hot coal stuck to the back of Tom's jacket and began to frizzle. The cockney picked up a bucket of water and poured it over both of them. In the meantime, the old hunter sat perfectly still, and never moved more than an eyelid, until they disappeared into the store tent and there rolled over and over. The tent bulged and swung and finally collapsed, with the two of them still under it, fighting in a cloud of flour and amid the clatter of pans. And the cockney danced outside and roared at the top of his voice:

"Go it, Kid! Go it, Tom!"

And Gibbs, thinking it was at last time to interfere, rose and advanced to the front. Presently, from beneath the canvas, there appeared a leg.

"That's the Kid's laig, ain't it?" asked Gibbs.

And with that he seized it, and dragged him from beneath the canvas, and set him on his feet. A few moments later Tom Arbuthnot emerged. They were both covered from head to foot with flour and were absolutely blinded. Dr Briggs came back to the camp to find them both trying to get the flour out of their eyes in order to renew the fight. The cockney was lying on the ground, rolling over and over in a paroxysm of laughter. Even Gibbs, who stood rubbing his chin, chuckled audibly.

"What's this about?" asked the doctor sternly.

"He hit me," said the Kid.

"So I did," roared Tom, "and I'm glad of it. He was insolent, and I won't put up with it."

"You wait till I get the flour out of my eyes, sonny," retorted the Kid.

"Come, that's enough of it," said the doctor, "we'll have no more. What's come to the tent?"

While Smith explained what had happened, the Kid went down to the creek to wash the flour out of his eyes and ears and hair. As he went he remarked:

"My joy-day don't seem to have been the success I reckoned on."

It seemed less a success when he looked at a broken glass and found that he had two black eyes. But there were compensations in Tom Arbuthnot's face.

"Look here," said Briggs, "this kind of thing can't go on. What did you strike him for, Arbuthnot?"

"Because he was insolent," said Tom savagely.

"Were you insolent, Kid?" asked the doctor.

"What, me insolent," said the Kid, "me insolent to a thing like that? I was on'y just beginnin' to think of tellin' him what I thought of him when he rushed me."

"Well," said the doctor, "I think you'd better shake hands. You seem to have come out tolerably level in the scrap."

"I don't mind shakin' hands," said the Kid generously.

"I'll see you damned first," said Tom.

Briggs said something to Gibbs, who took his rifle and walked off up the creek. Then the doctor spoke to Smith and the Kid.

"Fix up that tent, boys," he said. "I'll have a talk with Mr Arbuthnot."

"I don't want to talk to you," said Tom. "I've had enough of you. You seem to have brought me out here to make a fool of me."

"No," said Briggs, "I brought you out here to make a man of you. The first sign of being a man, Arbuthnot, is to know how to treat others. You don't seem to be able to get on unless you have your own way all the time. You want to be treated respectfully, don't you?"

"Why, certainly I do," said Tom.

"On what grounds?" asked Briggs pleasantly. "Because you're worthy of it? Are you anything, boy? Can you do anything? Do you know anything? I'd like to tell you now why you came out with me. Do you know why?"

"Because I wanted to," said Tom sulkily.

"Oh! no," said the doctor, "that wasn't the reason. You came out with me because your father hoped some experience in a new country might make you a little more possible, a little less selfish, a little less full of yourself, a little easier to get on with, a little more of a man. You thought it was your own notion, I dare say. Didn't you?"

But Tom didn't answer.

"You were mistaken," said the doctor, "if you did. It was Dr Curzon's idea and mine.

You don't know that it's my work to take hold of cubs like you and try to make men of them. I've succeeded with dozens, my boy, but you're the toughest contract I've had for some time. But I'll succeed with you yet. For your father has paid for it and I'll carry the contract through, somehow or another."

"Oh! will you?" said Tom savagely. "I'll see you don't. I'm going back to-morrow. I'm going back to-day!"

"Have you any money?" asked Briggs casually.

"No, and I'll thank you for some," said Tom.

But the doctor shook his head.

"Oh! no, my son, you'll get none from me."

"I insist on it," said Tom nervously, "I—insist on it! I must have money, I must! You don't think I'm going to stop with you after all this, do you?"

And Briggs smiled.

"No," he said, "I don't think so. I think it very probable we shall have to part."

"Then you'll give me money," said Tom.

"I'll talk to you about that to-morrow," said Briggs.

"I'll write home at once and tell my people all about you," said Tom Arbuthnot.

"You'd better go and do it," said Briggs. "I have some letters to write myself."

And with that he turned away and went to his own tent, where he did write a letter. When it was done he placed it in an envelope, addressed

it to Mr Thomas Arbuthnot, and put it in his pocket.

About an hour later Tom came and stood outside his tent.

"I want to know when we are going to leave this place," he demanded arrogantly.

"To-morrow," said the doctor shortly.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Tom, "but I prefer to go to-day."

"You can't," said Briggs. "Gibbs is out and won't be back till night."

Nevertheless, Briggs set the Kid and Smith packing up the camp. Tom took his rifle and went out and did not return till evening. When he got back the rest were having supper round the camp fire. The only happy persons were the Kid and the cockney.

"A gay outfit, this!" said the Kid, "this hyer experience of mine's worth two black eyes. To think I should have had my eyes blacked by an Englishman! I never thought I should live to see the day."

"*I* could black them," said Smith.

"Oh! you," said the Kid scornfully, "you ain't nothin', Smith. You ain't an Englishman and you ain't an American. You're a freak, you are."

And Tom Arbuthnot never said a word. As the Kid declared later, there was a frown on his face like a mountain thunderstorm. He retired early, and never noticed that the Kid had fetched in the cayuses from the mountain meadow in

which they had been grazing. When it was obvious that Tom was fast asleep, they packed things rapidly, saddled up, struck the other tents, and then the Kid, who knew what he had to do, stole quietly to Tom's and took away his rifle. By twelve o'clock, when the gibbous moon shouldered its way over a south-east peak, all was ready, and the doctor, taking a five-dollar bill and the letter which he had in his pocket, pinned the two of them with an old bowie knife to the stump of a pine outside Tom's tent. By that time the other three men were mounted and well off the camp, and Briggs followed in their tracks. They vanished into the forest by the trail that led down to the roaring creek.

The healthy life that Tom Arbuthnot had led in the Rockies made him sleep like a saw-mill hand. But somehow the next morning he woke up at six o'clock, when it had been good broad daylight for over an hour. The camp seemed very quiet, so he rose and put his head out of the tent. He rubbed his eyes as if he was still dreaming when he found all the other tents gone.

"Why, what's this?" he said, in alarm, "what's this?"

And then he saw the knife and the letter and the five-dollar bill.

"By Jove!" said Tom.

He pulled the knife out and read the letter.

> You wanted money. Here's five dollars. If you want more, work for it. It will do you good.

I still think you've got the makings of a man in you. When you are tired of staying in camp and cursing me you had better follow the trail we came up by, till you get to Simpson's Lake. Simpson might give you a job. Then there's Johnson's saw-mill at the Gap, and you can take my tip that if those places don't suit you, there's plenty of work to be found. Humping lumber will do you more good than medicine, and finding your place among men may make you one. I have hopes of you and I wish you luck.

Your sincere friend,
EUSTACE BRIGGS

It was a cold day for Tom Arbuthnot. He sat down on a fallen pine and stared angrily at the universe.

"This—this is horrible," he said. "I don't understand it. I wish I had hold of that man Briggs. I've been treated awfully! I wonder how I shall get home. Five dollars—what good is five dollars?"

And then he wondered whether this was no more than an evil joke on the part of the doctor.

"He wants to give me a fright," said Tom. "When he comes back I'll tell him what I think of him!"

But he heard nothing save the ceaseless roaring of the creek that ran past the camp.

"I'll—I'll give him till to-morrow," said Tom, panting.

But the loneliness got on his nerves, and he decided he would not give Briggs till to-morrow. He packed up what he could and took the trail

for Simpson's. He told the farmer his woes and requested him to be good enough to lend him enough money to return to England.

"Sonny," said Simpson, who was a typical old pioneer, with a chin beard, "you cayn't raise no money from me. Dr Briggs opened up to me the truth about you and the poverty of your parents, and his own charity in taking care of you and your onparalleled ingratitude for all his care and goodness."

Tom almost choked.

"My father's a rich man," he spluttered angrily.

"Young feller," said Simpson solemnly, "if you will reeflect for a few moments, do you reckon I am likely to believe you rather than my old and proved and reeligious friend, Doctor Briggs? Reeflect, my son, reeflect."

And Tom reflected, and choked down the expression of his rage.

"All the same it's not true, Mr Simpson. Give me enough money to telegraph to my people."

"I should be goin' against the strict and reeligious injunctions of my friend if I done so, sonny," said the old pioneer. "Reeflect and cawnsider that money may be obtained by work, and it's my tum-tum there's no other way of gettin' it. Some can be got by beggin', and some by cheatin', but the more you beg and the more you cheat the less you raise, my son. Would you like a job on my farm?"

"No," said Tom, "I don't want a job. I want to get back to England."

And Simpson nodded.

"Fine place, England," he remarked. "It's about four thousand miles to New York and the kentry is a free kentry. You kin walk to New York, my son."

"Why, it'd take months," said Tom with open eyes.

"Hobos hev informed me that it does," said Simpson quietly. "But if you object to hittin' the road, you kin go to work. I'll write you a letter to Johnson at the Gap; you kin work in his mill. Some hard work would do you good. That's what the doctor allowed. He let on you was very full of yourself and full of nothin' else. He urged me to speak my mind freely unto you. Will you have a letter to my old friend, Johnson?"

And Tom actually took it.

"I reckoned you would," said Simpson. "It's a case of have to! You've larnt suthin' already, my son. Don't you reckon you've larnt suthin'?"

"What have I learnt?" asked Tom gloomily.

"I'll leave it to you to cawnsider on the trail," said Simpson, "while you're hittin' the trail to my friend Johnson's you'll have a whole lot o' time to cawnsider the p'int."

Six weeks later Mrs Arbuthnot should have received a letter from her son, addressed from—"The Saw Mill, Johnson's Gap, Washington, U.S.A."

DEAR MOTHER,

Dr Briggs has turned out a scoundrel. He brought me out here and treated me as if I was no one. Then he took all my things and deserted me, without money, in the middle of a most desolate sea of mountains. All he left me was an insolent letter and five dollars. I have been compelled to take a terribly hard job in a saw-mill, along with the most awful men, who are very rude to me. Nobody believes my father is rich, and nobody will lend me any money to come home with. I am working twelve hours a day and my hands are frightfully sore, and I sleep in a pigsty. If ever I get hold of Briggs I will murder him. Please send me money so that I can come home at once.

That his mother did not receive the letter was due to the fact that Mr Johnson sent it on to Dr Briggs, who was enjoying himself in Tacoma. And Johnson sent a covering letter with it.

This pup o' yourn will be a dog some day. We are making him quite useful. I should reckon he weighs twenty pounds more than when he came. He's beginning to be able to handle lumber without dropping it on his toes, and the boys tell me he has the appetite of a grizzly. He's had two fights already, and he told me yesterday that when he gets big enough and strong enough to give you the father and the mother of a cow-hiding, he reckoned to do it.

P.S. I reckon he'll be here quite a while yet, because, remembering your advice, I set our best gambler on him, and month by month, I reckon, Bill will skin him. This was a fine notion of yours and Bill's very grateful and sends his best regards.

Briggs, when he read this letter, chuckled.

"If a saw-mill doesn't kill a man it makes him," said Briggs. "I've worked in one myself!"

Two months later Johnson and Simpson both came over to Tacoma on business and stayed a day with Briggs.

"How's my patient getting on?" asked Briggs.

"Fust class, couldn't be better," said Johnson. "It's done him a world of good. You'd hardly know him. He's quick and active and lively. The last thing he done in the hash-house was to stand up and say—'Look hyar, boys, I'll stand as much taffy as you care to pour out so long as you say nothin' oncivil about the King o' England, but the man that says anythin' oncivil about the King o' England, I'll knock his goldarned brains out with a cant-hook.' And ever since that the boys have been that monarchical as would surprise you."

"What does he say about me?" asked Briggs.

"I was keepin' that," said Simpson, "for a surprise for you. He says to me, says he, the other day:

"'When I gets hold of Dr Briggs I'll give him ondiluted hell!'

"'Will you?' says I.

"'I will that,' said the pup.

"And I said:

"'What, my boy, would you thump your benefactor?'

"'My what?' says he, fairly jumpin'.

"'Your benefactor,' says I, 'the man that made a man of you.'

"'It isn't his fault or his doin' that you reckon I can work some now,' says he.

"And I fair laffed.

"'Why, you goldarned sucker,' says I, smilin', 'what do you reckon he done it for?'

"And he looked at me with them big blue eyes of his'n and says, kind o' surprised:

"'What do you reckon to mean, Mr Johnson?'

"'What I says,' says I.

"'You don't mean to say——' he begins.

"And again I laffed.

"'Don't you reckon to feel like a man now?' says I. 'Cayn't you do suthin'? Cayn't you earn money? Why, you're a useful man,' says I, 'and if you like to stay with me you kin stay.'

"But he considered some inside of himself, and says:

"'Why, no, sir, I must be gettin' home soon, I'm thinkin' o' goin' into the Army.'

"'And why wasn't you in it long ago?' says I.

"And he turned his head about, this way and that way, like a b'ar over a blueberry patch, as if he was hayf ashamed of himself, and then he says:

"'I dunno, I ought to been, but I was a derned young fool,' says he.

"And again I laffed some.

"'Why, that's what the doctor allowed,' said I.

"And after that he went away very thoughtful, doctor."

And Briggs laughed.

"He did, did he? I've worked a cure, Johnson. Say, old chap, I think you can take off your gambler after a while, and let the boy make a little money. In a few more months he'll be fit to go home."

"He's mighty anxious to go," said Johnson, "becaze whatever he writes, his mother just sends back no more'n a few words to say she's glad he's well and gettin' on so nicely."

"I wonder whether he'll punch my head when he meets me in England," said Briggs thoughtfully.

"Not a derned punch," said Johnson.

And a year later, when a very brown and healthy young man, weighing thirteen stone, met Dr Briggs in his father's club, he went up to him with a shamefaced expression, and said, after a curious little pause of hesitation:

"Thank you, sir!"

From "The Madonna of the Beech Wood"

THE RESURRECTION OF BEARDY THOMPSON

From the point of view of Painted Rock Beardy Thompson was a man of no account. One hot summer's day he had been put off the West-bound freight by the train hands who had found him fainting in a " side-door Pullman," as the tramps call a box-car. Keno Gedge, the great faro expert of the Panhandle and the most popular gambler in Texas, being down at the Depot when this happened, took hold of him there and then and did his best for him. For Keno Gedge was a very kind man, and his wife was even kinder.

Gedge drove Beardy in Alonzo's buckboard to his own house and planted him in a shack just behind it, where Mrs Gedge nursed him and fed him till he became something in the shape of a man. Mr Pillsbury, who was Gedge's partner, said that Beardy was a soft-looking son of a gun, by no means a real tramp; and it soon turned out that he was a man of some education; he understood figures, and wrote a good hand. His talk showed a little acquaintance with books, and though he gradually acquired some of the Western lingo, his accent smacked rather of the Atlantic than the Pacific.

Gedge and Mrs Gedge did all they could for him when he pulled round and was able to work a little. Under their care, and with the kindly patronage of Mr Pillsbury and of Charlie Baker the Englishman, who took a fancy to the outcast, he made an attempt to earn his living. He split wood for Mrs Gedge. Once or twice Baker, who was partner to Fee, the windmill man, gave him a casual job. He also chopped wood for Pillsbury. But he never talked about himself, even to Mrs Gedge, until one day a tramp who was riding on the top of a box-car saw him at the Depot and recognized him. This tramp was a kind of king hobo who knew everybody in the United States, or so it seemed; for when he set eyes on Beardy he said, " Hullo, Mr Thompson! " and Beardy rose up and flew for his life. That night he got full, and fairly howled in Main Street. He sometimes did.

As it happened, Gedge was at the Depot, and he asked the hobo who the man was that he had spoken to, and just as the train pulled out the tramp said Thompson had been a minister in a little town in Indiana.

" There ain't no mistakin' him, beard or none," said the hobo. " Him and his wife hev given me many a square—no hand-out, but a real sit-down."

" And what started him on this racket? " asked Gedge.

" His wife skipped with another man, and it seems it broke him up some," replied the hobo. And with that the train pulled out.

Gedge never spoke of this to anybody but his wife and Pillsbury and Baker, though Beardy guessed right enough that the hobo had given him away. As it happened, it was Charlie Baker who first got him to speak.

One day when he was riding in from Sweetwater, he found Beardy working on the prairie, chopping mesquite. The Englishman hung up his horse, and sitting down rolled cigarettes and smoked. Of course he offered Beardy one, and he took it and sat down too. He kept on looking at Baker and opening his mouth like a fish out of water, as if he had something to say.

"Well, what is it, Beardy?" asked Baker, "give it lip."

"Mr Baker, did you hear what that tramp said of me to Mr Gedge?" asked Beardy.

"Sure," said Baker, "but there's nobody but me and Gedge and Mrs Gedge and Pillsbury that know you've been in the sky-pilot game."

"Aye, I was in it," said Beardy, pulling at his beard. "Times a man wants to talk, Mr Baker —it's very difficult not to. Have you ever been on Double Mountain Fork?"

"Why, what do you know about that part?" asked Baker.

"My wife came from there, or thereabouts," said Beardy slowly.

"Did she?" asked Baker.

"She was a Western woman," said Beardy. "She called this part of the country 'God's country.' She loved the prairie, and she fairly

loathed the East—loathed it! The prairie-bred folk do, you know. But she skipped out and left me, Mr Baker."

"What for?" said Baker, turning to him.

Beardy was trembling.

"It must have been her nature," said Beardy gloomily. Then his voice broke, and he cried.

"Buck up, old man," said Baker kindly, "tell me about it if it helps."

"She ran away with some one from the West," said Beardy; "it—it broke me up—broke me up, Mr Baker. That's why I am—what I am!"

Baker took him by the shoulder.

"Steady, Beardy, steady," he said. And Beardy cried like a child, and told him how he had taken to drink, and had preached with liquor in him and had got fired.

"So I came West bit by bit these two years," he said, "out to what she called God's country. It was where she came from. I—I hate it, I hate it!"

"It's a fine country, all the same," said Baker.

"For those that like it," said Beardy bitterly. "She liked it. And I—I loved her, Mr Baker. She was a very handsome woman. They called her the minister's red-headed wife. It was a wonderful colour, and with it she had blue eyes—as blue as the sky—and a clear skin, as clear as cream. And she was tall and strong; but she hadn't any children. Perhaps it was that that broke her heart."

The tears ran down his face, and Baker

stared at him. There was a little thrill in the Englishman, and a great curiosity; for he felt sure that he knew the woman of whom Beardy spoke. She was Bill Grier's wife, and Bill lived on Double Mountain Fork, not five miles from where she had been born. Grier was a mighty good sort, and a good husband; Baker knew that. And he knew that Mrs Grier was very happy, for she had two pretty children, and, as they said, there might be another one now.

"Je-hoshaphat!" said Baker.

"What's that?" asked Beardy. "What did you say, sir?"

"Nothing," replied Baker. "I was only reckoning up what you'd been saying. It's a sad yarn, Beardy. Perhaps she wanted children. I've known that break up marriages before this."

"Aye," said Beardy harshly, "and it will a long time after we're dust in a dog's eye."

"Did you ever come across a man called Grier?" asked Baker after a long pause.

"There's no one hereabouts of that name that I know of," replied Beardy.

"He doesn't live in the town," said Baker. "He's got a ranch on the Fork you spoke of. All I was thinking of was that he was the best man in these parts after Keno Gedge. I was just thinking how Gedge did what he could for you."

Beardy nodded, and brightened a little.

"It made me do a whole lot of thinking to find out that the best man in this town was a

professional gambler, Mr Baker. I wouldn't have believed that when I was East."

"There's a whole lot of truth folks don't believe in the East," said Baker.

And with that he got on his horse, and nodded and loped into town. He wondered whether he should tell Gedge and Pillsbury what Beardy had told him, and he determined to think things over and have another talk with the outcast before he did so.

The very first person he saw next morning was Bill Grier himself, driving his old buggy which looked as if it had come over in the *Mayflower*, or been brought to America by Columbus. Grier seemed mightily anxious. He pulled up outside the Green Front just before Baker came by. Pillsbury was there, and Grier spoke to him; and when Baker got to them and shook hands with Grier, Pillsbury turned to him.

"Say, Charlie," he asked, "is there any sky-pilot in town? Mr Grier wants one."

"Why, what for?" asked Baker.

"To baptize the new kid," said Grier anxiously "It don't seem to be doin' so well at present as the others. And my wife is apprehensive as to its future, bein' some religious. She's doin' well herself, but the kid's pippy; and she sent me in for a minister, and I'm bound to hev one. What's become of old Mr Smith?"

"He's not in town," said Pillsbury. "You cayn't hear his voice."

As it happened, Mr Smith had gone west to

El Paso. According to Pillsbury every one in Painted Rock knew he was a long way off, because they could not hear him. For when he preached with his chapel windows open in the hot weather you could catch all he preached half across Texas, or so they said.

"Well, what about Mr Shepherd?" asked Grier.

"I'll find out and send you word," said Baker.

And presently he learnt from Mrs Shepherd that her husband was sick with malaria, which he had picked up in Tom Green County down on the Rio Grande where he had been running some kind of a missionary racket. While Baker was standing talking with Mrs Shepherd, Tom Fee came along and spoke to him. He wanted Baker to go out at once a mile or two up the river to look at Wilkins's windmill which had gone wrong. So Baker asked Mrs Shepherd if she could send her boy with a note to Mr Grier at the Green Front to say what was the matter with her husband. Then he went away with Fee.

When the news came to Grier and Pillsbury, Grier was in a great state of mind.

"Jerusalem! I don't know what I am to do," said Grier. "If the boy peters out before I get back, my wife will be mightily disgruntled. She's got ideas about religion with which I don't hold; but there's no arguin' with a woman about religion, especially if she's had a long spell in the East. For the East is notorious fatal to freedom of mind."

" Well, never mind about freedom of mind," said Pillsbury, " what you want's a minister, and I'll raise you one. Now do you reckon it would matter, Grier, whether a man was sober in his habits or not, if it came to the exercise of his duties? "

" I see no reason why it should," replied Grier. " He ought to be able to put a little thing like a baptism through. And I dare say he repents? "

" Oh, he repents, right enough," said Pillsbury, shaking his head. " I've seen him repent."

" How did he show it? " asked Grier.

" I've seen him cry," said Pillsbury.

" Then I reckon that would be all right," said Grier simply. " The baptism would hold, Mr Pillsbury, I see no reason why it shouldn't. And besides, between you and me, Mis' Grier wouldn't know the difference. I'd keep it dark."

Just then Keno Gedge joined in the conversation, and Pillsbury explained that he proposed to put Beardy Thompson on the job.

" Why, of course he's your man," said Gedge eagerly. " Don't you be set agin him, Grier, when I tell you he's cuttin' mesquite on the prairie for me this very day. Why shouldn't a minister cut mesquite on the prairie for a gambler, especially if he's an honest gambler? "

" I see no reason," said Grier seriously.

" Then I'll send out for him and we'll fix him up dandy. In the meantime, Grier, come and have a drink."

When Beardy was brought in from the prairie he wondered what it was all about, especially when he was taken into a corner by Pillsbury.

"Now, look here, Beardy," began the gambler, "we've got a job for you, and you mustn't shy off of it. It's the kind you've been accustomed to."

"What taffy are you giving me, Mr Pillsbury?" asked Beardy humbly.

"It's not taffy," replied Pillsbury, "not by a derned sight. Me and Keno Gedge and Charlie Baker are acquainted with the fact that you air a minister, a full-fledged sky-pilot, and you cayn't deny it."

"Of course I don't deny it," said poor Beardy, "but I don't like to talk about it, and I don't want it known."

Pillsbury shook his head.

"Well, that's where you and me part—or where we should part if I didn't get my own way. You're a full-fledged minister, Beardy Thompson. I reckon you could preach if you was asked, or marry a couple, or baptize a kid if there was any necessity—now, couldn't you?"

"Of course I could," said Beardy. "But I never shall again."

"What?" said Pillsbury. "Not if it was a case of public mo-rality, to say nothing of public decency—it bein' plumb agen the laws of God and Texas to let a kid die without havin' gone through the correct pro-cess."

"I suppose that's so," said Beardy. "I do

know that the way you have of talking, Mr Pillsbury, makes me shiver, but I suppose you mean well. What is it you want me to do?"

"We've fixed it up," said Pillsbury, "me and Gedge. We're going to put you into a new soot of clothes—or as new as we can get them—and send you out some caunsiderable distance to baptize a kid. Now, I do hope, Beardy, you won't buck none against thishyer scheme."

Beardy considered the matter for a moment or two, and then he replied, "Why, Mr Pillsbury, the way you've spoken to me it looks like a case of have to, don't it?"

"Don't trouble none about that," replied Pillsbury. "You come along with me next door. We're goin' in to Alonzo's to hev that beard of yours off."

"Why?" asked Beardy, grabbing at his beard as if it was a kind of a fetish.

"Why?" asked the gambler, shaking his head mournfully. "Have you looked at yourself in a glass any time this year, Beardy Thompson? Let's have no more palaver. You come along with me to Alonzo's, and we'll have that crop off your face before a lamb could give two shakes of his tail."

So Pillsbury walked him into Alonzo's shaving palace. And Alonzo was very joyful, for a beard like that was a standing reproach to a razor.

When Beardy was finished there wasn't a man in Painted Rock who would have recognized him on the street. Pillsbury was amazingly proud

of him when he took him round to Gedge's house and fixed him up in a black coat, a black pair of trousers, decent boots and a shirt. After that he looked a trifle unfinished about the neck from the clerical point of view, so Mrs Gedge borrowed a collar and white tie from Mrs Shepherd. When he was completed they all stood in front of him and admired him.

" Why, this is the most interestin' gee-ographical discovery I've made in my experiences upon these Western pla-teaux," said Keno Gedge. " Mr Thompson, you're a wonder! When I think of what you was when we hiked you out of that box-car, and when I see you now, I am fair amazed. What do you say, Mrs Gedge? "

And Mrs Gedge owned that she was surprised a little, but not so much, because she had always known Mr Thompson was a gentleman.

Then he was taken out and introduced to Mr Grier. He was glad to get into the buggy and start for the prairie. Every one had been very kind, but there was such a thing as being too kind, and he was glad to get away. He felt very strange, for he remembered the time when he was first dressed as a minister. He went through all his life from that hour until he came to Painted Rock. And now this stranger, Grier, was driving him out to Double Mountain Fork. Somewhere in that very country his wife had been born; it was what she called " God's country."

As they drove fast, Grier talked. He told him about everything, and made particular inquiries

as to what Mr Thompson thought would happen if a child wasn't christened.

" You see," said Grier, " my wife is religious. She was a widder when I married her, her first husband havin' been a minister, Mr Thompson. Now, do you reely think that a kid would go to hell if it warn't baptized, Mr Thompson? "

" No," said Beardy stoutly, " I don't think so."

" I don't see no justice in it doin' so," said Grier thoughtfully, " but then I'm no expert in the-ology. If I knew as much about the-ology as I do about sheep I might be a minister myself."

And then for a while Grier relapsed on a pipe. When they were many miles out of town he began talking once more about his wife.

" I'll be glad for you to know her, Mr Thompson," said Grier. " She misses the kind of religion she was used to regular. Of course a minister's wife gets religion daily; it becomes a habit. But she don't get much of it on the perairie, seein' as she never goes into Painted Rock. She has a hatred of towns since her first husband died and she quit Indianny."

And Beardy Thompson looked up. He said with a little gulp, " Did she come from Indiana? "

" Yep—and from Minnesota too. She was one time livin' in St Paul, a mighty fine city, so she tells me."

Beardy grabbed hold of the side of the buggy and held it tight.

" But all the same, she says the kentry round the Fork is ' God's kentry.' You see it was where

she was raised before her uncle took her East after her father died."

And Beardy went as white as cotton.

"Is—is she a young woman, Mr Grier?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"Oh, yep," nodded Grier, "she's still young, and though I say so, the most re-markable woman you'll find in the Panhandle. Mis' Wade, that has the next ranch, allows that for a red-headed woman she's the most attractive person she ever came across in her life. That's her pe-cooliarity, Mr Thompson: red hair and bright blue eyes. Red-headed women is frequent hot-tempered, jealous, freckled, and hard to stay with. As a general rule, Mr Thompson, don't marry a red-headed woman. But my Maria, she's the kindest critter you ever see. You'll take to her; and she'll take to you—it's her nateral disposition to like them as preach the Gospel."

And Beardy heard himself say that he was sure he would like Mrs Grier. But now he knew who Mrs Grier was. And still Grier talked and talked: of his wife, of the children, of the sheep and cattle, of "difficulties," of Ben Thompson—"your namesake, Mr Thompson, but a very different kind of cayoot"—and of the cattle men, and politics, and who was going to be Governor next time. And Beardy sat there with cold sweat on his forehead. And all the time he kept on saying, "Yes, Mr Grier," or "No, Mr Grier," as the other talked on, knowing nothing, glad in the presence of bitter fate.

And so at last they came where the road pitched off the higher prairie down to a flat by the creek, a silver band of bright water.

" That's my home, Mr Thompson," said Grier proudly, " and a prettier you wouldn't find, as I've been tellin' you. My old woman will be glad to see us, and to see you special. She'll give you a warm welcome, Mr Thompson. And of course, between you and me, I shan't let out nothing that Mr Pillsbury and Mr Gedge told me about you. So far as you and me's concerned, Mr Thompson, that's a thing that never happened—you're a highly respected minister down to the Rock."

" I—I thank you," said Beardy Thompson.

And when they drove right up to the house Grier jumped down after putting the lines into Beardy's hands. He ran inside and called out joyfully, " Maria, Maria!—I've fetched him! "

Then he came out again and called to Beardy, " Jump right out of the buggy, Mr Thompson, and walk right in. Maria is fair crazed to know you. Oh yep, these horses hev hed enough: they're plumb petered out. I drove fast, bein' some anxious."

And like an automaton Beardy Thompson walked straight into the house. He knew he must see her while Grier was at the stable.

And then he did see her, just one little fraction of a second before she turned. Yes, it was Maria, the woman who had been his wife. But it was not Maria—it was not the woman who had been

his wife. This was another kind of woman, strangely altered, renewed, full of happiness.

Then she looked his way and saw him standing there. She gave a little choked cry, and held up her hands and ran back, and cried out, "My God! Ned—is it—you?"

And Beardy Thompson nodded, but for a little time could not speak. And then at last he did speak, and he said slowly, "Yes—it's me."

She came up to him and caught at him by the coat. She spoke very swiftly, in the strangest voice.

"You mustn't tell him," she said, "you mustn't, you mustn't! He doesn't know anything. He thought my husband was dead—dead!"

And Beardy looked down at her, and she saw his lips tremble. Then he said as he nodded, "I'll not tell—I'll not tell, Maria."

But still she held to him, as though she could not be sure of it.

"I'm married to him," she whispered, "married!" And then she looked away and whispered, "I've got three little children, three little children—you wouldn't hurt them, and him, and me, would you?"

And Beardy shook his head, and replied, "No—no, I wouldn't." He stood shaking.

And then she said suddenly, "He's coming back now, he's coming back!"

And with that he heard Grier's footsteps, and he saw her face change. He wondered at the nature of women.

But Grier was as happy as a bird in spring. And his wife said in a louder voice, "Please sit down, Mr Thompson, you must want something to eat after your long journey."

And he heard himself answer, "Thank you, Mrs Grier."

"I'm in that," said Grier joyously. "That's what I'm after, Maria—I've got the appetite of a chaff-cutter. Rare glad Maria is to hev you here, Mr Thompson—ain't you, Maria? If I hadn't fetched you she'd hev hoofed me right back again to Painted Rock, wouldn't you, Maria?"

"Don't talk so," said Mrs Grier. "You—you make out I'm very hard on you."

She picked up a plate and it rattled against another, and Beardy heard it and knew that she was trembling. Even Grier noticed it.

"You're narvous, Maria," he said. "Come, come—the kid'll be all right now, and we'll do what's right and proper for him after we've had hash. But even a minister's a human bein'—they ain't angels all through, air they, Mr Thompson?"

"No," said Beardy.

"All the same," said Grier, "I've a mighty admiration for 'em, a mighty admiration. I'm not one of those that thinks a minister ain't a man because he ain't allowed to shoot. They're necessary obliged to prac-tise self-denial. It must come very hard on a high-sperrited man to be a minister."

And then they sat down to eat. Mrs Grier was very quiet, but Grier was very happy. And every now and then he said, " Why, goldarn my skin, Mr Thompson, you ain't eatin' none! "

When the meal was over Mrs Grier went to bring down the baby. Bill Grier rolled cigarettes and smoked them, and said he was as full and jolly as a tick.

" Oh, Mr Thompson, do shake hands with me again—I'm that glad to see you," he said joyfully. " Maria took on most scandalous about the kid being unbaptized. That's why I scooted off to the Rock to find a minister or perish. If you wouldn't hev come I'd hev fetched you at the point of a gun. Oh, I would! Knowin' old man Smith, and what an obstinate pusson he is, I made up my mind I'd hev roped him like a steer and tied him up, if he wouldn't hev come. A man hes to caunsider his wife, Mr Thompson."

" It's quite right," said Beardy steadily.

" Of course this is a par-ticular case, Mr Thompson," said Grier, " the kid not bein' well. Perhaps you might be able to give your opinion —not only about the baptism but also about his health."

" I'll do what I can," said Beardy.

So Mrs Grier brought the baby down, and Beardy took it in his arms. He had much ado to prevent the tears running down his face, and he did not look at Mrs Grier. Grier stood over him.

" Waal, what do you think of him? " he asked anxiously. " I'd grieve caunsiderable if the kid

went up the golden stairs, seein' he's a boy, and the other two's gals. Will he make out to live, Mr Thompson?"

And Beardy said he thought that the child would live all right and do well. And presently he christened it, and when Mrs Grier took the child away he saw that she was crying. But Grier was in great glee, and slapped him on the shoulder again.

"Waal, that's put through, and I reckon it relieves Maria caunsiderable. We'll show you the little gals now."

He called to his wife, "Bring them kids in—my little gals. I won't hev 'em behavin' like wild cats, skeered o' strangers. And I ain't goin' to look on Mr Thompson as a stranger now, Maria."

The little girls came in, and it seemed to Beardy that they took to him. He knew then how much he had wished to have children. And presently the younger turned to her mother and said with a strange, wise air, and with her head cocked on one side, "Maw, I think I like this man." So Beardy took her and put her on his knee, and tried to talk to her. And she lifted up her hand and touched his smooth shaved chin.

All this was a vision to him: it was something unreal. It had not happened; it could not happen; his old life had been a dream. He had never been married, though this woman was his wife. He had been a ghost living with a ghost. But he

was glad the little girls liked him. Somehow he was glad of that—he did not know why.

Later in the evening Grier went out to look after the stock. Mrs Grier put the children to bed while Beardy sat outside. Presently she came out to him, and said in a queer kind of strangled voice, "What are you going to do about this?"

He looked up at her and then down at the ground, and did not answer.

So she said again almost fiercely, "What are you going to do about it?"

"It looks as though it was up to me to do nothing about it," said Beardy in a queer whisper.

He saw she was shaking like a leaf.

"You promise that—you promise?" she cried.

He nodded.

"Yes, that's all right, I promise—Mrs Grier."

"You're a good man," she said.

"Don't say it," whispered Beardy.

Then he heard her choke, and she said, "And are you—are you doing well?"

"I'm doing very well indeed," said Beardy after a long pause. "It's been a hard fight, but —I've got through: I've got through."

But he knew that he was Beardy Thompson—Beardy, the man who sometimes got full and howled on Main Street; the man who split wood for the gamblers. And he remembered he had Gedge's coat and pants on, and boots lent him by Pillsbury. But all the same he nodded, and said again, "You can see by—the look of me—that I'm doing very well."

And then Grier came back, and Mrs Grier went in again. Beardy took Grier by the arm and walked him away down towards the creek.

"I've got one thing to ask you, Mr Grier," said Beardy.

"It's granted, whatever it is," said Grier earnestly. "But what is it, Mr Thompson?"

"Don't give me away for what I am to—to Mrs Grier," said Beardy. "I wouldn't like you to. If I've done anything for you that's all I ask."

Grier put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Why, Mr Thompson, I wouldn't—not for her sake, nor for your sake, nor for my own sake. You, bein' a minister, know what women are. She might possibly think the ceremony wouldn't work. Oh yes, sir, she might. You likely wouldn't know that's the way her mind would wander, but I know her. Of course I'll not tell her. Make your mind easy, Mr Thompson. And now it's time for supper."

Beardy stayed in the ranch that night and never slept a wink. He rose up early, and was out before Grier came down. Then they had breakfast, and Grier hitched up his buggy again; and while he was doing it Beardy talked with the two little girls and the woman who had come from Indiana to God's country.

But when he went away he said very steadily, "I wish you well, Mrs Grier, and all happiness for you and the children."

And she said, "Oh, sir, the same to you—the same to you!"

Then she burst into tears, and Grier shook his head. He told Beardy presently there was no understanding the ways of women.

When they were about half-way to Painted Rock Grier said—" I reckon drink's your trouble, Mr Thompson? "

" Partly," said Beardy.

" It would be a good thing to break with it," said Grier, " and I hev been thinkin' that if you'd come out to the Fork and stay with us for six months, I'd engage there shouldn't be a sight or a sign of liquor within miles of the place. What do you say to the notion? "

" Thank you very much," said Beardy, " I'll think of it. It's kind of you."

" Maria would love it," said Grier. " She always loves to do things for some one. There are men would be jealous of a minister if their wife had been married to one, but I'm not that sort, Mr Thompson. So just you think it over and let me know, and if you feel like it send me word, and I'll drive in and fetch you out. I'll caunsider I'm doin' just a very little thing for all your kindness."

And when they got into Painted Rock Grier gave Keno Gedge twenty dollars for Beardy, and said he hoped Gedge would do his best for the minister.

" It's a great pity," said Grier, " when a man travels the downward path."

" That's so," said Gedge gravely.

" I believe he's a good man," said Grier.

"Charlie Baker says the same of him," replied the gambler.

"My wife allows he is too," said Grier eagerly.

"Does she now?" asked Keno Gedge. "I don't mind ownin' that Mrs Gedge is of the same opinion. In a matter of that kind I rely caunfidently on a woman."

From "The Madonna of the Beech Wood"

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS LIKENESS

As usual, there were several officers in khaki waiting to see Dr Henshaw, but Rose Hartopp was too deeply occupied with her own troubles to think much of them. She was sorry for three who were badly scarred, but much more clearly she saw in her mind varying pictures of her own lover, who was, they said, altered beyond recognition. Though others were waiting, her turn was next, and she wondered impatiently how long the doctor would keep her beyond the hour of appointment, the last he would ever make for her. For on the mantelpiece stood a note in the physician's own handwriting:

"After the thirty-first of July Dr Ewing Henshaw will cease to practise."

"He's come to an end of it, too," thought Rose; "how hateful these ends are, and what a hateful creature I am! He'll think me so, I'm sure of that!"

And, even as she trembled at the ordeal before her, the door opened and the attendant spoke her name. She came to herself with a start and saw that one of the soldiers, who was seated at the table, had a maimed left hand that trembled like an aspen leaf. She gave him a shy glance of pity

as she left the room and then forgot him. There were so many who were even more unfortunate. To see them made her quiver.

As she entered the consulting-room the old doctor rose. She saw that he was already preparing to leave London. Some of his book-cases were empty; much of the better furniture had gone. The paintings, many of them given to him by artists, were, she knew, already in his house in the old Wiltshire village he loved so. Only the engravings of Sydenham and Gull and the fine face of his old teacher Paget remained upon the walls. Something, too, had gone from Henshaw himself, something of his old fiery energy and self-confidence. But still in his eyes shone the infinite kindness and sympathy which made the meanest patient at his old hospital love and trust him.

"So—so you *are* going?" she sighed.

He took her hand and smiled.

"My dear young lady——"

"My dear old friend, oh, I am unhappy! I'm a wretch, a wretch!"

He looked at her keenly.

"You've made up your mind, then?"

She nodded, and tears came fast.

"Sit down," he said gently. "I'm grieved, but I understand."

"And I'm beginning to understand how worthless I am," she sobbed bitterly. "But how is he?"

She asked about her lover—her lover back

from France this three months—whom she had not yet seen.

"In himself much better," said Henshaw as he sat down.

"He's truly, truly, so awfully changed?" she asked again, although she knew the truth already. "He's not—not like himself?"

"No," said Henshaw, "no. I've never hidden that from you."

She wrung her hands.

"And he used to be so splendid, so—fine, so—so actually beautiful! And I—who love beauty and shrink wickedly from all that's not lovely! What a mean thing I am! Tell me, are you sure, sure, I shouldn't know him?"

And Henshaw tapped with his fingers on his desk and seemed to think. Once or twice he looked at her and opened his lips without a word. At last he spoke.

"This fortnight you've been here four times?" he said.

"Four unhappy times," she answered, and Henshaw rose and paced the room.

"I do not blame you. I know what you are," he said gently, "and I feel you couldn't bear it."

"I can't, I can't! But—but—oughtn't I to see him? What will he think of me?"

"He understands now," said Henshaw. "I said you'd been here four times——"

She looked up at him fearfully.

"What do you mean?"

" Each time there have been in the waiting-room officers who are my patients——"

She sprang to her feet.

" Ah, I've seen him, then? I've seen him? "

She clutched the doctor's arm.

" Yes, you've seen him," he answered.

" To-day—to-day? " she cried.

But then Henshaw lied to her.

" No, not to-day, last week."

" And he——"

" He's taking it, and will take it, beautifully. I know he's trying to write to you again."

" Yes, but what a wretch I am," she said in a lamentable voice, " what a miserable coward! If only I'd been a poor blind creature who had loved him, who had never known what beauty is! "

" The blind can know beauty," said Henshaw, and she said swiftly, " Forgive me. I—I forgot. What, what am I to do? "

" You can do nothing. You must try to remember him as he was, and some day life will renew itself for you and him."

She cried bitterly.

" And now he'll remember me as I was when I looked at him and never knew him! But what will he do? Will he be able to go back to the Army? "

Henshaw shook his head.

" No. He's coming with me to Wiltshire, for a long time I hope, and there, among new people who did not know him, he may write and paint again."

She took the doctor's hand and clung to it.

"You're a good man, the best of men, and I'm —what I am! Oh, will he hate me?"

"You know better. It is what he must have expected," said Henshaw. "It is what he did expect."

"Could you say anything more bitter than that?" she cried.

"I didn't mean to be bitter," said the doctor sorrowfully. "I know too well that if, with your temperament, you married him now it would mean misery for both."

"You think that?" she asked. "You really believe it?"

"I'm sure of it."

"And for him—if I don't?"

"He's still young and will recover. Besides——"

He paused, and she looked at him.

"Besides?"

"Those who did not know him in the old days won't see what you would see. They'll be blind to what you knew."

She rose and shook her head.

"Ah, blind! And some day, perhaps, another woman will say, when she hears of me, that I was blind! Good-bye."

Henshaw went with her to the street door and there shook hands in silence. When she had gone, he said to the servant:

"I'll see Captain Singleton next."

But, as he returned to his room, he said:

"I wonder! I wonder!"

He heard Singleton's step in the passage and went to meet him at the door. The soldier, who was to be a soldier no longer, was big and strong, but his scarred face, still brown where it was unmarked, worked oddly. He took the doctor's hand, and the old man held it firmly.

"You—you see?" he said.

"She didn't know me," said Singleton, with twitching lips.

"I wish you hadn't exposed yourself to such an ordeal, my boy," said Henshaw.

"I—I had to," said Singleton; "but she looked at me as she might have looked at any stranger who had been through things. Any stranger! I'm a man who's lost himself, lost his likeness! My dearest don't know me."

He sat down heavily. His hands still trembled as they had done when the woman he loved had pitied him without any knowledge that she looked upon her lover.

"I'd have known your eyes anywhere," said Henshaw. "You never looked at her straight?"

And Singleton shook his head.

"Be thankful you've got your eyes, old boy," said his friend. "You might have been blind. And those you meet for the first time won't know you are changed. All they'll say will be —'Here's a man who's been through it for us and for England, who bears many scars and bears them bravely.' You'll try to do that?"

He laid his thin, fine hand upon Singleton's shoulder.

"I'll try," said Singleton. "But—but I was fool enough to hope—a little."

The doctor waited a moment before he spoke again.

"I wonder if you'll be angry with me if I say that I told her she was right."

But Singleton said nothing.

"You know her nature, and I do too, as I know her health. She's none too strong, and both of you would have been most miserable. And now——"

"And now?" said Singleton.

"I think in time both of you may be happy. Time——"

"You all say that," sighed Singleton.

"Because we know," said Henshaw firmly. "No man who is strong and young can be unhappy very long. Those who don't recover go under slowly or quickly, and even during this period of pain and unhappiness you've been getting stronger."

"And strength can torture a solitary man," said Singleton, "one who must be solitary."

"You'll work again," said Henshaw. "I'm going to take you back to Nature."

"Somehow, I don't think I shall paint any more," said Singleton.

"Then write," replied his friend. "But, first of all, come with me and sit close to the earth, on a ploughed field if you like, till the smell of

fertility helps you. I knew an old colleague who used to say (and get laughed at for saying it) that he would like to take the young men whom he taught and make them sit naked in a ploughed field or by a running stream till they became simple and got the rhythm of moving singing water into their very hearts."

And Singleton sighed again.

"I dare say he was a very wise old man," he said. And then he added, with something more like a smile, "Have you any big trees, Henshaw?"

Henshaw nodded, smiling.

"Ah! I remember your passion for them. You're like the Turks, who seem to worship them. Of course there are trees, and in the park, beside my house, in which you'll have full leave to wander or to paint, there's something like an ancient forest. Perhaps you'll meet a dryad there."

But Singleton thought only of the fair woman who had looked on him and had not known him. What could any creature of an alien woodland be to him, whose life was like a stream lost without direction or impulse in a barren fen where no birds sand under a sunless sky? But Henshaw, who knew Life and Death, knew better.

As they went down to Wiltshire three days later in a reserved carriage, the very movement of the train did Singleton good. He knew it and sought the reason of it.

"You're getting away from yourself, Harry; leaving some of your atmosphere behind you," said Henshaw. "*Cœlum non animum* doesn't

always represent facts. Those who have strength not to return *do* change their very minds."

"A man's face is part of his mind," said the young man. "I suppose you think I must have been very vain, Henshaw?"

"No," said the doctor, "you took a natural joy in yourself, as I did when I was young. There's nothing wrong in that."

"Why did you never marry?" asked Singleton presently.

The doctor was silent for a moment. Then he answered, "Some day I'll tell you. But you're as much as a son to me."

And Harry pressed his hand affectionately.

The house in which Henshaw lived lay in an old-world village lapped in a warm fold of the downs. It, too, was very old, and the most ancient portion of it was half timbered. It was overgrown with ivy and ampelopsis, and, on the garden or south side, which fronted a park-like expanse of grass and woodland, the gnarled limbs of a great wisteria were now half hidden with climbing yellow roses. The garden was filled with flowering herbaceous plants, and a company of glorious hollyhocks lifted their young spikes of colour higher than the western wall. On it and on the stone roof were great patches of yellow lichen. Near the sunk ditch which separated the garden from the manor park were three big elms and a very old and beautiful silver birch. Over the ditch ran a rustic bridge. A white house showed a wing among the near

woods, and on the further hills grew a solitary clump of trees. When Singleton looked out of his window on the world which he hardly dared to hope would renew him, he murmured:

> "Where dewy twilight poured
> On the haunts of ancient peace!"

The kindly summer air, the silence and shadows of the evening came to him like a benediction. It was strange indeed that he should be here in that most eloquent calm after passing through the fire which still held many of his loved companions, though some had found in it a greater and more enduring peace than his own.

When the sky at last darkened, and the faint western glow vanished and the stars shone in a pure sky, it appeared possible that even yet life might return to him. If he did not forget, he might forgive, the bitterness of fate and learn that renunciation held nepenthe in its hands. Life, as it had been, seemed a strange and far-off turmoil, and even the woman he had loved grew for a time more like a shadow than a reality. As the night descended he felt how much more he knew than he had known. Peace brought out something that was in him, as the night drew forth the delicate and tranquillizing odours of the open evening primrose beneath his latticed window.

He slept well, and in the morning feared much less the sight of strangers. In the old woman who waited on him he found no sign of repulsion. He scrutinized himself in the glass with steady

intent, and after a little while lost in a kind of dream his own sense of reality, just as a man may repeat a word until it has no meaning. Here was a stranger with sad intent eyes whom he must learn to know and live with. But this stranger still looked like a man, one who had lived, who had seen things, and had done his work in the high tragedy of war.

Once a week Henshaw visited his old hospital in London, which had lost many of its accustomed workers. When he went the first time he said to his friend:

"Try to forget the world, Harry. Live with the flowers and the trees. Watch them doing their work. See how they renew themselves when they are nearly destroyed. Remember that your business now is to be like them. Don't chide your own idleness. No one is idle who grows in health. When you are tired of the garden go into the park. Very old friends of mine live there, and you and I have the freedom of the place. Some day, when you begin to grow buds, you shall know them."

"I want to know no one," said Harry, almost sullenly.

"At least make friends with the trees," urged Henshaw. "There's a splendid old oak out there which might have sheltered most kings of England. Find it, sit under it, and consider its great ways."

"They'll see me from the house," said Harry nervously.

"The lady who owns it is an invalid and never walks in it," said Henshaw, sighing. And he added, as it seemed casually, "if her daughter's at home she won't trouble you either."

"Is there anything wrong with her too?" asked Harry.

And Henshaw nodded gravely, but said no more.

Dearly as he loved his friend, Singleton found his temporary absence almost a relief. He felt that he would not know himself until he experienced steady long hours with no one to speak to him. He must consult the streams and trees. Perhaps presently he would get upon a hill and see how the land lay with him. He was wonderfully conscious that a man can live and die without knowing what is in him. Perhaps real life was finding it out in bitter exploration. Some lived, as it were, in a little island of their own deep minds while uncharted seas and magical countries waited for an awakening keel. And he who had lived until the war in such an oasis found himself in an unmapped desert. But there were, he soon began to feel, signs of fertility and comfortable habitation upon the horizon.

In his desire for present solitude there lay a terror of it if it were prolonged. After a few days in this new atmosphere he was perfectly conscious of returning strength and capacity. With these wholly renewed, solitude of soul and body would become unendurable. He felt that it was one of the lies of romance to say that youth was

the time of real passion. As life settled itself, energy, which in youth was wasted in every vague aspiration, ran in one direction. The young had many griefs, but more ways of cure or compensation. As a man grew older and he recognized his limitations and the limitations of life, the world simplified itself. It became a real thing, often hard and cruel, not a dim, undiscovered country in which "magic casements opened on the foam." And yet—and yet——

He was renewing himself faster than he thought. His nights were no longer a recurring drama of hideous inability to meet and avert disaster; dreams in which actual horror, once faced with courage, became a fantastic mixture of reality and sick imagination that froze his blood and woke him sweating ice. These hours returned less often; they moderated their intensity, and he no longer looked forward with apprehension to the hours of sleep. He began to set himself tasks, and found it possible to read and keep his attention on his book. But he never went out of the front door. Some day he would go, but first of all he must cross the little bridge into the park with its shadowy glades and wide sunny spaces. He longed for them, but they terrified him all the same. The walls of the garden were comforting and a great protection. But so was darkness when vision failed and the shadows came close and kept away the feeling that an open space was full of unknown dangers. It was nearly a month before he went down one

night to the bridge, determined to cross it if he could. Henshaw was again in town.

The night was windless, the sky starry without a speck of cloud. Long ago the crescent moon had sunk from sight; the village was lapped in ancient and consoling silence. He was alone in his world, and once more he hoped to feel his spirit expand till it took in all Nature. This thought came to him clearly. It seemed that, so far, his mind was contracted to the dimensions of the house and garden. The stars did not belong to him; they were alien and remote. He no longer rose up to them on the wings of imagination, as he remembered doing, not only as a child, but on the field of war before he had been smitten down in a blaze of light which wrecked him. As he stood by the gate of the bridge it seemed that a voice spoke in him, as voices had done since his disaster. Sometimes they had been the wicked whispers that the Ancient Mariner dreaded, signs of a disturbed and morbid brain. Such things still troubled him before he slept, though they were mostly indifferent suggestions of speech heard and forgotten. But now the words he was conscious of might have been uttered by his wise old friend. Or perhaps they came out of the past when he was ambitious. They said to him something that many would think foolish or irrelevant, and others symbolical. They were "wait till the clock strikes!"

It was a foolish saying perhaps, but he re-

membered how often he had had to wait till a certain hour for desperate action. He answered himself, and said aloud:

"I'll wait!"

Within five minutes the hour sounded from the ivied church tower and he laid his hand upon the gate at the first stroke. It was easy: it was hard: it was impossible! Yet, as the last stroke fell upon his strained mind, he opened the gate, though he did it with a greater effort than he had ever made in leaving the trenches. And suddenly he almost laughed, for he recalled how leaving them had always set him free and made him strangely, wildly happy after the endless hours of long waiting. He felt, somehow, that he had done a bigger thing than he had yet achieved when, with peculiar exultation, he found the open space before him and the impossible, difficult bridge behind him. So simple a thing was a great adventure, and he knew that he had won a victory. Something said that he had left more behind him than he knew. Perhaps it was his old life and the woman he had loved. For a moment at least he felt he loved her no longer and was truly free.

In this resurrection of the imprisoned spirit he walked slowly towards the shadow of heavy trees and at last came to one he had marked as the noblest oak among them all. Deep as the shade was the light was still sufficient for him to perceive its ancient majesty, its huge widespread boughs, some of which were helped by supports,

placed there by those who recognized and helped its timeless age. About its gnarled and bossy trunk, here and there gapped and hollow, ran a wide seat. He wondered who sat there. Perhaps the child of the White House, whom he visioned to himself as one afflicted. There were other calamities than his own, and some, it might be, even harder to bear. In that moment he remembered how wonderfully many of his comrades had endured, and he felt strangely humbled.

This old oak had outlived many dynasties, and under its broad canopy dead dust in yonder churchyard had dreamed, mourned, or told its tale of long-forgotten love. Of all who had been there he was the last and, perhaps, not the most unhappy. A light breeze rose and the leaves whispered ancient stories, and in this melancholy music he found peculiar joy coming to him. He forgot himself for a little while: the thrust of urgent energies and the anguish of wasted efforts towards renewal sank into oblivion.

As he sat the glade opened before him towards the big house, and when his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw a well-marked path which led straight in its direction. It drew his eyes, and he was presently aware of a light which showed through far-off foliage. Many had walked that path, it might be, who were past memory. The whole woodland was full of spirits, like those dryads of whom his old friend had spoken in jest. Perhaps his brain recognized something before it came up in consciousness, but with a

start he woke from dreams and came back to the warmer vital earth. Had he thought of dim, white, shadowy friendly ghosts because there were such, or had dreams created them, building out of fantasy hallucinations that were a gift of the night? For on the path he saw a figure coming towards him and entering the shadows, and he caught his breath in a moment's apprehension which crisped his hair as though a cold breeze ran through it. And then he knew that it was a living creature, not anything wrought out of the mind, and he said swiftly, as he slipped from his seat and sheltered himself behind another lesser tree, that this might be the girl whom he had envisaged as a sickly and afflicted child. She must not see him, or in the darkness she would be afraid.

"She walks beautifully and as swiftly as if it were day," he thought, and because of her grace and the lightness of her steps, his creative mind gave her the beauty which he could not see. And to that added beauty he gave more still because of his mood, which was now wholly softened and self-forgetful.

Some day he was to know this creature of the woodland, if she were indeed the daughter of Henshaw's old friend. But was she a stranger, and not of the house after all, one who would presently go and be seen no more? In the warm sweetness of the night, which was itself romance that made him human, since it took him away from the bitterness of reality that had rendered

him less than kin to his fellows, the thought grieved him. And then suddenly he saw that this at least was not to be, and that he was to know something of her who had broken his reverie. She spoke aloud in alarm as she stayed her steps.

"There's some one here!"

Her voice was poignant with an anxiety that Singleton could not fathom, but he spoke rapidly to relieve her rising fear.

"I'm so—so sorry if I've alarmed you," he exclaimed, and instantly she relaxed her poised rigidity.

"But I—I don't know you," she said.

"I never thought to meet anyone so late," he answered. "Doctor Henshaw told me——"

And at the doctor's name she turned to him without even the shadow of fear.

"Oh, you're his friend—the—the soldier?"

"Yes, and the night was so beautiful and this wood——"

"Is it peaceful for you? Are you glad to be in—in my wood?"

With the words she made him free of it.

"Ah, yes, I'm glad," said Singleton. "And this fine old tree——"

She made a motion of affection towards the shadowy oak.

"Isn't he splendid?" she asked, "and, though so old he's so brave and green, such great company!"

"I've found that out," said Singleton.

She laughed with obvious pleasure.

"I came for something I left here."

"And found a trespasser," he said.

But she denied it. No one who understood a tree could be that.

"Then I may come here again?" he asked.

"Any friend of Dr Henshaw's may," she said softly. "He's my great friend."

"Then you see him often?"

"Oh, very often," she answered, and she made a little smooth gesture in the air which he could not understand, it was so curiously curved.

"He's splendid!" said Singleton warmly.

"Yes, he's little brother to my tree," she cried, "and as kind, and as full of shade and dear old thoughts of wisdom. Come here when you will."

He spoke eagerly:

"And if you see me you won't run away? I'm—I'm scarred like the old tree."

"I've not seen you yet," she said, and again she made that little gesture in the air, but more timidly than when she spoke of Henshaw.

"Ah, it's dark and I'm glad," he sighed. "How did you know I was here? I was quiet and hid when I saw you coming."

She paused and seemed to ponder.

"I just knew the wood was different," she said at last.

"Then you didn't see me?"

"No, I didn't *see* you," she said, with a sudden mournfulness of voice which puzzled him.

"You walked through the wood as if it were day and as if you knew it blindfold."

And for a little while she did not answer him.

"Ah, but I do know it—blindfold," she said at last, "every tree and path. It's my world."

And something in her voice made him wonder what it was that made so sweet a creature seem solitary.

"I—I won't spoil it for you," he said.

She made a gesture of alarm, almost of distress.

"You don't mean you won't come again?" she asked swiftly. "Of course I wouldn't like *everybody* to sit here. But you have such a good voice, and, besides, you understand trees, you know."

There was a little laughter in her voice when she said that, but she grew very serious again as she added:

"And, more than that, you're a soldier and have been hurt, and I'd give all my trees to help you."

He was much moved, and when he answered his voice shook.

"You have helped me already. But I wish——"

"What do you wish?"

"That I knew your name."

"I thought you knew it," she said, "for I know yours. The doctor told it me."

She laid her hand upon the oak-tree.

"Dear Mr Oak, this is Captain Harry Singleton, from France. Captain Singleton, this is my

big brother, and my name is Joan Chester, and the doctor calls me Jenny. I—I hope we shall be friends."

He knew that they would be, and when she took her work from the seat under the oak and went away, the world seemed a better place to him and her "Good night" like the promise of morning.

He spoke to the doctor of the tree but not of her. His mind worked curiously when he remembered the dark night which was so friendly and hid him, for he was glad to be hidden still. Some day she must see him, and perhaps would be disturbed even if he had a "good voice." So long as they did not meet in the daylight he could think of her with pleasure: she had made him free of her domain. How quaint her thought was to introduce him to the oak! His thoughts often went out with vivid interest to the wood and the strange sweet creature, its dryad.

"I'm changing," he said to himself, but the doctor knew it too, and wondered if a deep thought of his own would ever bear fruit. In the second month of Singleton's stay with him he spoke definitely of the Chesters.

"I'm going there now. Will you come with me?" he asked; but Singleton shook his head.

"No, not yet."

"You'll like them both," pleaded Henshaw. "And it's time you began to meet people, full time."

Singleton would not go. But that night he

wandered to the wood again and once more sat beneath the oak. The influences of the place were sweet to him; his heart grew braver and life more possible. If the world renewed itself he, too, was being renewed, and the changes in him gave him back something of his youth. It seemed that some day he might even write again, and perhaps tell for his own pleasure the tale of the old oak-tree which sheltered him and was big brother to Joan. For so he called her in his thoughts.

And even then she who was in his mind came down the path, this time not swiftly but as though in a dream. He heard her voice, as if she repeated verse to herself, but suddenly she said aloud:

"Ah, but I shall never see him!"

He held his breath and wondered who it was that she would never see, and, to his utter surprise, there rose in him something like jealousy. And then, very suddenly, he was aware of a great sense of freedom and release. The woman who had been his desire was his desire no longer; she was but a shadow of the past, belonging still, it might be, to some ghost of his ancient self. For in these dreams and the shadow of the forest and of night all things seemed possible: even that the past never died at all, but was in some unimaginable way immortal. So a man might live and yet have many ghosts, happy or unhappy, though the world renewed itself for him till the inevitable end of final sunset.

This time Joan did not feel his presence, though she touched one great bough of her oak, and he dared not speak, conscious as he was of her melancholy thoughts of some one whom he did not know. She moved a little way down the path by which he had come, and staying on the verge of the heavier shadows, looked, so it seemed, towards the old doctor's house. She remained there for a moment, and then returned and passed so closely that he wondered she did not see him. But she went swiftly and held up her hand before her with a strange appealing gesture he could not understand. Her attitude and the rare grace of her motion seemed something Greek, immortal and pathetic.

That night he dreamed of Rose, who had forsaken him, and in his dreams he spoke to her without passion or reproach. The strange thing was that he who spoke was not himself after all, but some one who loved another woman whose name the dreamer could not utter or, strangely, even remember. Rose asked him if she shrank from his scars, and he answered "How should she? She is blind," and with that he woke up in a strange wonder. For as true as the old oak held his court in the forest, Joan herself was blind!

This was now so clear to him that he wondered at his own past dullness. That she was not wholly like others he knew at the very beginning, from his old friend, and her words "Ah, but I *do* know it blindfold," might have shown him the very truth. More than that, her out-held hand

spoke plainly, and even the little gesture with which she adorned her loving speech of the doctor was a plain sign. For her own satisfaction she drew in the air the fine profile which her loving hand had often touched.

But in that dream some one (at once himself and not himself) loved Joan. When he woke that seemed not true. By now he was deeply interested in her, he owned so much, but of that painful passion which had once consumed him he felt nothing. Yet very wonderfully he drew one great thing out of his dream which still remained: his freedom was certain. He could think of Rose without anger or reproach; of a truth she belonged to another world. For him she had died, and in his passionless state it seemed that he himself was dead, too, in a great condition of immortal calm. And so he fell asleep again, and when he woke at dawn was marvellously refreshed.

That morning he spoke to Henshaw with much cheerfulness.

"You're a great physician," he said gravely.

"I know I am," said the doctor, smiling; "and in the pharmacology I use there are mighty drugs."

"The earth, I suppose, and ploughed fields and running water," said Singleton, smiling.

"And wide spaces and the sound of wind in the trees and an old house and an old friend," said Henshaw, and the two men looked at each other with deep affection.

"The knowledge, too, that others have grievous troubles beside myself," said Harry, after a little pause. "I don't mean wounds and death, but——"

"But what?" asked the doctor.

"Even here," said the soldier, "even here one finds grief, or at least disaster."

"You have not found it," said Henshaw quietly. "You mean——"

"Joan Chester," replied Harry softly.

"The happiest, most wonderful creature in the world," said his friend. "She told me she met you in her wood one night. I was waiting till you spoke. Don't think her unhappy. When did you know this?"

"Only last night. It came to me in a dream," said Harry. "She *is* blind, then?"

"From her birth," said the doctor. "But perhaps she sees what we cannot. She has the bravest spirit and, never having seen, it may be she misses sight only as I miss a great endowment of genius in some art I do not understand. To her all who see have a gift, something very wonderful, and she smiles and says we hear nothing and that our touch is blind."

"She spoke of the voices of the wood," said Harry; "I could have believed she saw the life in every leaf. And when she spoke of you she made a swift little movement of her hand."

"When you see her she will ask if she may *see* you and then she will touch your face," said Henshaw.

And Harry blenched a little.

"Every scar will be a wonder to her and a proof you are a man," said Henshaw gravely. "And as for your voice, she remembers it so well that she gave it back to me with all your intonations. She said you had a good voice, my dear boy, and that you were beautiful! That's her way of thinking. Goodness, by which she means kindness, is beauty to her. I remember she said indignantly of a woman she once met, 'She's *not* beautiful. She kicked my dog!' If you loved birds and flowers and dogs and cats and horses and children you would be good if you committed every crime in the Decalogue."

"It's no bad code of ethics," said Harry.

"She's like a daughter to me," Henshaw went on, "and I don't want to praise her too much. But she's a musician, and has the wonderfullest memory for poetry. Her mother reads to her, and so do I sometimes, and her few friends. She asked me if you——"

He paused, and Harry turned to him.

"Yes?"

"If you would read to her with your wonderful voice. She said you must know Keats and Shelley, because no one could have a good voice who didn't love them. Only, of course, some poor people never get a chance of being quite beautiful. You see she speaks like a wise child."

"Will she ever be a woman?" asked Harry, and that question the doctor did not answer.

Nor did Harry know why he asked it, if the doctor did.

"I'll read to her," said the soldier. "I've not read aloud since——"

And Henshaw knew that he used to read aloud to some one else who loved his voice, or so she said: and had yet been blind to very much. He wondered what she was doing or would do. Sometimes he feared her and the workings of her mind.

They walked across the park next day, and Henshaw spoke of Joan's mother, whom Singleton had at last consented to meet.

"She's wonderful, too," said Henshaw, "but has suffered and still suffers and is strong. I've known her since I was a boy. I can't tell you everything, but guess what you like, Harry. All I can say is that she was rich and I was poor, and by doing what I thought was the right thing I did the irremediable wrong one. A proud conscience is a poor guide, the very poorest."

He turned to Harry and laid his hands on his shoulder.

"Don't make the same mistake one of these days. If in time to come (long years if you like) you fall in love with a king's daughter who loves you, follow your instincts, not some romantic notion of nobility. We manage ourselves too much, to say the least of it."

Harry knew most of the doctor's ways of speech, but what he meant he did not quite fathom. Presently he spoke a little nervously.

"I can't help feeling rather bad about this, you know," he said, stopping suddenly when the house showed through the trees.

"About seeing Mrs Chester?" asked Henshaw, smiling. "Don't you worry. She knows your face as well as I do. I showed her the last photograph we took at the hospital, and she said, 'I'd like to know this man.'"

"And I suppose you told her a lot of nonsense about——"

"About your decorations?" interrupted Henshaw. "Why, to be sure I did, and I didn't hunt little words or play spilikins with phrases. I piled rhapsodies into her lap with a malt shovel until she seemed to think you were Roland and Oliver and d'Artagnan and Porthos in one, to say nothing of Petrarch and Leonardo da Vinci."

They were a minute or two alone in the drawing-room, which looked out on a secluded lawn surrounded by old cypresses, before anyone came to them.

"You'll see Joan first," said Henshaw, "and presently I want you to take her for a walk in the garden or let her find you a copy of Keats while I speak to Mrs Chester about business."

And at that moment the door opened and Joan Chester came in.

She was taller than Harry had imagined, but of no less grace than the midnight hour in the woodland had given her in his memory. She moved delightfully and without hesitation, and by the joy in her face it was hard to think she

dwelt in darkness or was blind. In her eyes, though the lids mostly drooped a little, there seemed no lack of understanding, or any vacancy, but rather some of the light that never was on sea or land, something strange and rare, the promise and assurance of heavenly tenderness. That she loved the doctor was a certain thing, and when the old man kissed her broad brow she felt for his hand and pressed it, and then turned to where Harry stood with a certainty that startled him.

"Dear Doctor, and your friend?" she murmured shyly, and yet with an eager look that showed no sign of self-consciousness.

"Here's his hand," said Henshaw, "and no weak thing in the way of one, either. Tell me what you think of it, Joan!"

She grasped the hand held out to her warmly, and Harry felt that for all her slightness she was strong.

"I think it is a good hand," said Joan.

"Do you believe it can pat dogs and write poetry?" asked Henshaw.

"Don't listen to his chaff, Miss Chester," said Harry, "he is wise, but prefers medicine to Milton and——"

"Calomel to Keats," said Henshaw. "I sometimes think if I'd been doctor to half the English poets they'd have been cured of verse and have turned to prose or honest work."

But Joan said he was wicked, and only pretending, for he knew Wordsworth's best sonnets

by heart and couldn't talk about Westminster Bridge without tears in his voice.

"Because my old hospital is close by," retorted Henshaw. "And now I'll leave you two to have a talk while I see your mother. Have you made up your minds to like each other?"

"I believe and hope we did that in the wood," said Harry. "The old oak bears witness."

"Take him into the garden, Joan, and show him your flowers," said Henshaw; "we'll meet again at tea-time."

As they went out of the window together Henshaw stood and looked at them and sighed and then made his way to Mrs Chester's room. They shook hands in silence, and he sat down opposite her. She was, like Joan, very slim, but much more fragile, and bore the marks of many weary years upon her face and in her heavy crown of whitest hair.

"Joan's with your friend?" she asked eagerly.

"They're in the garden," answered Henshaw.

"She seems to like him?"

"I think he's something very wonderful to her," said Henshaw, "and that's not strange, for he's as much to me. He hated war and went into it like a man and made his men and comrades love him, and, besides that, he is an artist though he hardly knows it."

"And what does he think of her?" asked Mrs Chester.

"He's happy with her now because she can't

see him," he said, " but perhaps he's still thinking of the other woman."

" A poor thing, a poor thing," said his friend, clasping her hands, " but you'd defend her? "

" I could have got her to marry him," said Henshaw, " but it would have been criminal on my part to urge it. Besides, even then, I thought of Joan."

" It was good of you," said Joan's mother, " every day this last year I've seen the change in her. And yet, with her misfortune, whom could she marry but some one who looked, or most likely looked, for money? "

" Ah! Singleton's not that sort," said Henshaw. " But has Joan changed so much? "

" She can't have children about her as she once did," said her mother. " And sometimes, when she thinks I'm asleep, I've seen a look upon her face I've known in others. And—when I am gone—what is there for her? I must see her happy before I die, I must, I must! If this young man is all you tell me it seems a very godsend to me. Has she *seen* him yet? "

But in the garden, even then, Joan and the scarred soldier sat together under the shadow of a majestic fir, while by them stood great lilies in ranks where the sun fell, and Joan was speaking.

" You will stay, then, with the doctor for a long, long time? " she asked.

" I hope so," said Singleton, " as long as he wants me and will have me."

" Then that will be for ever," cried Joan, " for

he loves you. I hear that in his voice when he speaks of you. He has no son, so you will stay and we shall be friends."

"Indeed, I hope so," said Singleton.

"But—but may I see you with my hands?" she asked with sudden timidity.

"You mean——" began Singleton.

"I must touch your face," said she, "that is, if you don't mind, and then I shall build you up, you see."

"I'm very badly scarred," said Singleton nervously, "you—you mightn't like that."

But Joan was suddenly indignant, and colour came into her cheeks until she looked like a rosy lily.

"A soldier's scars are badges of honour," she cried, "and better than medals. Oh, I shall not mind, but like you all—all the better for them!"

"You are very good," said Harry with a break in his voice, "and I shall feel much honoured if you will but touch me."

He took her hand and lifted it to his face and, with his eyes closed, felt her eager delicate fingers and heard her murmur to herself as she went smoothly over his profile. And when she touched the seams that marred him she did not sigh or flinch, but lighted up as though they were indeed a king's gifts to one who had endured greatly. When she withdrew her hands she made that strange little gesture to herself as though she stored away among her impressions something to be long remembered.

"I can see you now," she said, "for my sight is in my hands first, and afterwards I—I make more of it. No one can understand that."

And Harry was awed by her look, which was very serious and strangely beautiful.

"You don't, then, know at all what light is?" he asked in a low voice.

"It is everywhere," she said softly. "I understand it best when I'm with my mother."

"You don't miss it?" he asked, after a little pause.

"Just as I miss not being able to write an ode to a nightingale," she said, smiling; "I've missed the gift of the art of light."

And it seemed to him who heard her that one who could speak like that might have many gifts.

"You will come and read to me sometimes?" she asked. "That's the sun to me."

"Whenever you like," said the soldier.

"Because truly you have the right voice," said Joan eagerly, "and I know you would get the song of poetry, which is almost the best of it. Most only read the words and, at the worst, do elocution like a terrible governess of mine who murdered all the poets in the schoolroom, according to rule, and made me cry. She thought it was her pathos, but I was crying for poor Keats and Shelley. And now we must go in to tea. I can tell the time by the sun."

So presently he found himself led by her to her mother's room, and the elder woman looked

at him gravely and accepted him, and Harry felt much comforted in his mind by what her eyes expressed. For a time he found it hard to talk, though Henshaw and Joan chattered quite merrily. Yet, after a little while, he changed his seat and sat down by Joan's mother, and, though he could scarcely recall afterwards anything she said, he did not fear her eyes, nor could he read into them any thought of repulsion. He knew she had suffered, and saw how she lived in Joan and yet feared for her in time to come, and he forgot himself at last and talked as he had done in the old days. And before they went Mrs Chester said:

"Remember, Captain Singleton, you are free, by night or day, of all the lands that Joan rules. And come and see us when you will."

That night she wrote to Henshaw:

> I do not know all he was, but I think I could learn to believe he is all you say and more. If that happens which you and I have thought of so much it will make me happy. What will it matter if he never quite gets over his sense of bitter change if she to whom he owes fruitful life is blind to nothing but his outward aspect? She said to me when you had gone, "I think he is splendid and has a *beautiful* face." And she added presently, "Scars are just history," and, though I didn't understand her at first, I see now what she means and how wise she is. You and I know it is true, my friend.

So wisdom and love worked about Harry Singleton, and Henshaw told him he was busy

getting well and thereby working for his country though he never so much as heard again any disastrous sound of war. The younger man was glad to think this might be true. For the woman he had loved became gradually as much a dream as the battles in enduring faithful France. But he did not know that in the young, whatever their history and their scars, love is for ever replaced and grows again, regenerating the world. As he talked the old doctor smiled, for he knew a man could be in love without knowing it, and that when he discovers it there is a new heaven and a new earth and great energy is born for work. The time for this discovery grew near for Harry and her of whom he so often thought and spoke.

That he had work to do he now felt sure, and day by day turned more to literature. Without knowing it, he was moved to put aside painting by the thought that Joan could never see what he did, whereas she found an infinite pleasure in the spoken word which was naturally and beautifully chosen and apt to the living thought. That he could ever be a great writer he knew was unlikely, and yet day by day, as his experience fertilized his earlier aspirations, he felt he had something to say and learnt better how to say it. Joan said so when he read verse to her or told her something he thought of writing, and what Joan said became daily more pleasing to him.

" And yet I read Keats to you," he said one day

in sudden gloom as they sat together under her oak-tree.

But she answered softly:

"There is a glory celestial and a glory terrestrial."

And he understood and was glad to be of the earth and to lay hold of it strongly. For he began to know who it was that she had said she would never see.

"Why, Joan, you are the very spirit of inspiration and encouragement," he said once, and her face flushed joyfully and in her blind eyes were happy tears. She knew not consciously the bitter sweet path she trod, but there was something about her now which made her mother tremble. For Joan came back again to the children of her little village and sang when she was by herself, though she still had long fits of silence. Mrs Chester spoke to the doctor about her and Harry.

"If we've been wrong it will kill her," she said.

"We're not wrong," said Henshaw. "Though he is at peace with us he is only happy with her. Shall I speak to him? I think I might."

"And say what?" asked Joan's mother. "No, I would rather it came of itself."

And while they took thought Nature worked. For that evening Harry went to the wood and sat under the oak. It was as perfect a night as the one in which he had first met Joan, and though it was earlier, there was no more light than there

had been then, seeing that the year was older and the leaves were browning in the mellowing autumn. The sky was the deep, pure blue of a semi-tropic night, and a waxing moon was in the west. There was perfect stillness in the wood save for the faint hum of the unseen world which wakes in shadow, and he knew that it was Joan's best woodland hour. Presently he heard her footsteps, and yet she stayed a little while upon the path and turned her sightless face to the kindly over-arching sky. When she came to him at last he spoke very quietly:

"So you've come, Joan!"

And she answered with less boldness than her wont:

"Yes, dear sir, for the night is beautiful, and the dew in the open brings a sweet scent out of the grass, and your stars are shining."

Sometimes she called the visible aspects of Nature "his" and some of the hidden meanings of things "hers." And suddenly his very spirit spoke in him and he was astonished.

"My best star has come down out of the sky and lights up our wood, Joan."

"You have kind words for a poor blind girl," she said as he took her hand.

"Don't mourn for that, Joan. Ah, if I could only give you my sight!"

She sat down and still keeping her hand he seated himself beside her.

"You do, good sir," she said more happily, "but still I mourn and mourn a little. So many

things I cannot measure with my hands and feel their curves and in-ness and out-ness and think about their wonderful shapes. Oh, kind sir, give me one of your stars in my hand."

"I wish I could. But if they're mine they're in my hand, and I give you my hand, Joan," he said, "or I will if you call me Harry."

She trembled a little.

"My friend Harry!" she said softly. "How strange that you did not know me two long months ago, and now we are in my wood and we talk of stars and big moons and odes to nightingales! So often I've wanted to find some one who understood stars and poems, but the only men I've ever known, except the doctor of course, for he says poetry ought to be much more often prescribed, seemed to think stars and poems just words, and then they talked golf and said they couldn't live here because there wasn't any. All of which is most absurd. Imagine not being able to live here because of little round balls somewhere else! But you understand and give me stars and their dear quaint names, and that's why I call you 'dear sir'——"

"And also 'Harry,'" said the man beside her with a little choke in his voice. For her nature and her thoughts, her pure ignorance and child-like wisdom, played upon him as though he were some living instrument. And passion grew in him, as it seemed by a miracle, and the light came suddenly and her wood was Paradise. The past of bitter memories was dead. She who had

left him was no more. In this pure love he was renewed miraculously, but even then he wondered if Joan understood.

"Why—why do you tremble?" she asked innocently, and he knew that if it was true that she loved him she did not know it, nor could she grasp the reach and height of her own emotions. But he did not comprehend her humility or the depth of her conviction that she was destined to loneliness. He answered:

"Some day I will tell you my thoughts, Joan. You know how words will not come."

"I do know it," she said. "Didn't you say yesterday that the best thoughts have no words and go out to seek them? Wasn't the dove's olive branch in the old story a word of genius?"

"That's splendid," said her lover. "You help me, Joan, and often make me tremble. I'll seek words for my thoughts of you and come to you with them."

"Or without them," said Joan. "They're beautiful, but can be done without."

For she knew the thought might be greater than its visible garment and that the gods endued none. That night her lover gave to thinking and the doctor found him very silent, yet knew what worked within him.

Next morning, soon after Harry Singleton, who had found himself and his words, went out across the little bridge, there came a threat to all that his friend and Joan's mother had planned. A delayed letter reached the doctor, and on the

envelope he recognized Rose Hartopp's writing. He opened it and read:

> I have been thinking all this time and much has happened, a great disaster to a friend of mine who was in the same position as I. Her lover has killed himself and she's mad. I'm coming to see Harry to-morrow, for I must. He has made his sacrifice and I must make mine. Be kind to me, for I'm so unhappy.

Henshaw crushed the letter in his hand and leaving the house walked hastily to the village post-office and sent her a telegram.

"Do not come, I beg of you. Wait for my letter, which I am writing now."

He did not know, as her letter was written in London, that she was then with friends in the same county who lived not more than twenty miles away. He sat down and wrote to her, and then hurried to the station, five miles distant, and met the train by which he thought it possible she might come. But while he was absent Rose Hartopp reached his house in her friend's car. At the door she asked for Captain Singleton.

"He's out, miss," said the old housekeeper who answered the bell.

"Cannot I find him? It's—it's very important," said Rose in agitation.

"Likely he's in the park, miss," said the old woman.

"And Dr Henshaw?"

"He's away in his car, miss. Maybe, if you

came through, you could find the Captain, for he's apt to sit under the big oak."

"Show me the way," said Rose. "I'm a very old friend of Dr Henshaw's and of Captain Singleton's."

A minute later she crossed the little bridge, and seeing the faint indication of a path which led to the biggest group of trees, followed it trembling. With great reluctance she followed it, and her spirit was full of fear, nor did the gracious aspect of the landscape solace her.

But meantime Joan's lover stood before the blind girl and spoke.

"I have found the words," he said.

And she who had waited for him and them lifted her face. On it was a glory, for the sunlight found a way to her through the branches above them. And hope unhoped-for shone in her.

"What words?"

"You are very beautiful, Joan."

She shook her golden head and coloured sweetly.

"It's lovely to think some say it. Is that the word, dear sir?"

Her lover took her hand.

"To find the words there must be knowledge, Joan, and I've been living in a land where there was none, and where all things flowed together as they may in a dream, where nothing was certain but sorrow, and that with the many aspects despair puts on. And yet all the time you taught me——"

She murmured:

"What did I teach you, I?"

"What in others' words meant nothing, Joan. That life renews itself and that out of deprivation may spring a nobler growth. Your blindness made me see how splendid you were. I've not always known beauty when I saw it first, but knowing it——"

His voice faltered and her instincts told her the truth so that she paled and put her hand to her heart. He knelt before her.

"Do I understand?" she murmured, and then she seemed to look full at him and in her blind eyes there was something more than sight. She reached out her hands and found his shoulders.

"You've suffered!" she said.

"Oh, I have suffered," he answered.

"Is it past, dear?"

"If—if I am truly dear to you it is past," he said, shaking. "For—for I love you."

She bent and kissed his forehead, and he rose, and sitting close to her, put his arm about her waist.

"Yes, I love you, I love you," she said almost wildly. "Keep me close to you, close, close! But no, it's all impossible. I never knew love could tear one so!"

But the man knew well.

"It's a miracle you—you should love me!" she cried. "Say it again, again!"

"I say it, dearest."

She surrendered her very soul to him.

" Tell me what to do or say! I said light was like love, I, a poor blind creature! "

But her lover laughed in sudden joy. Another heard it in the woodland and came panting.

" You taught me to see," he said, " and now I'm healed. That's love."

" Oh, it gives and gives and grows richer," she answered in awe.

" My very scars have dropped from me," he said softly. " You took beauty by the hand and brought her to me. And last night, when I knew I loved you, I heard something in me sing. Though it was voiceless it was a melody, and in my dream you gave me words again."

But all she said was:

" Then am I a creature thrice blessèd, my belovèd."

She laid her head upon his shoulder and was silent. But when he looked up from her dear face, he saw the woman he had once loved stand shaking by a tree. And he never moved a hair's breadth or so much as caught his breath, but there was a tremor in his whole frame which made Joan cling to him the more.

There was something in the face of Rose Hartopp which helped him to courage. Beautiful as he had thought her when she was all the world to him, she was still more beautiful now that his heart had left her and found its true home at last. What was it in her which created such beauty though her features worked in peculiar agitation? And like a flash of lightning the

answer came to him. She had been unhappy (oh, so unhappy!) and had come to him repentant and now knew there was no need for repentance, and yet grieved that there was no need, being very sure she had lost the greatest gift in life. And yet again she was glad, for even if she had been accepted and had grown to love him as he was, there would have been for ever in her very soul the sense of her own weakness and the knowledge that she had failed greatly. But mingled as her passions were, he knew she rejoiced with him even then. He held up his hand to her as though to ask her continued silence, and then Joan spoke again.

"I know, dear one, all that happened before you knew me."

"I knew that you knew," he answered. And still the other woman could not move.

"You—you loved her?"

"I loved her."

The great tears ran down Rose's face.

"And now?"

"She is still my friend," he answered, "and some day joy may come to her. Life is very strange and its gifts not to be counted."

Joan knew that as she held to him.

"You forgive her?"

"What have I to forgive now?" he asked, and she who had rejected him saw that there was a strange beauty in his marred uplifted face. She turned and went, weeping.

"Your voice is so good," said Joan; "tell me

the truth, the truth! Have I made your heart sing and your dear scars cease to ache and brought joy and hope back to you?"

"You have done all this," he said. "What shall I give you in return?"

"You shall give me life," said Joan.

From "The Madonna of the Beech Wood"

THE SMILE OF LA GIOCONDA

HALSTEAD was fair and fine, and so far over forty that he began to urge that men of fifty were hardly yet in their prime. He loved to live, loved to surround himself with luxury, with illusions, with life's cotton-wool. He read all that made the world a romance; he shut his eyes to any sad-coloured truth. Poor people did not exist, or they deserved poverty, or they liked it; mad people were happier than sane: foxes loved the huntsman; fish the hook; criminals their gaolers. There was nothing in pain when he felt none. When it came he howled. Yet the pain of others never touched him; he took drugs against their agony. On their behalf he denied its existence, and believed what he chose to believe. He lived in a circle; in a cube, in a padded, heavenly cell: he was a fat dreamer, a comfortable parasite, well-fed, well-found, rich, accepted, a citizen of Sybaris, and he was married to the only person he ever loved a quarter as well as himself.

He chose her as he would have chosen a picture. For he was a connoisseur; he had knowledge, and if he loved Correggio overmuch and Michael Angelo too little, he had the softer-gritted critics on his side in their hearts. He was impressed by beauty, suppleness, soft

contours, rich colour in flesh, brocade or tapestries, or stained ivories. He had a choice collection of splendid miniatures; was an authority on them. He talked of flesh tints, carnations, rich impasto, and the flowing jargon of the schools melted softly from his tongue. He took Sophia Halstead from her collection of sweet sisters, for she was the tallest, the bravest in bold contour, and yet delicate: the richest in swift expression: the fairest in colour showing in red-gold and pink. There he failed, for he too was fair. But when he looked at her he did not see how he limped behind her, was less than her mate, wanting in fire, in passion. She was such a beaker of Venetian glass as needed red wine of the South. He was a vintage of the Rhine, yellow rather than gold, delicate, rather dry, unintoxicating. There was something Teutonic about him, merged in a softer race without more colour. She was fair, but rich as a Giorgione; she might have walked bare-headed by St Mark's when Venice's sun burnt on all the seas of the world.

He loved her in his way; he gave her a gold frame; jewelled her; clad her in all the chosen stuffs of a thousand looms; set her in oak chairs, looked at her through closed hands and half-closed eyes. He pointed out her tones against backgrounds audibly to new acquaintances. The one difference between her and a picture was that she was without price.

He believed in her artistically. She was authentic. He knew her pedigree. A worthy

dealer had sold her to him. But, above all, he trusted his own intuitions and his knowledge, and his perfect trust in those resulted in a perfect trust in her. She was always hung in the right light for him, and he invested her with every quality desirable in a woman. She was kind, devoted, religious (how wonderful she looked in stained-glass atmospheres!), faithful, not amorous and yet mortal; grave and still swift to smile, gracious in giving, and obedient to her lord.

He noted all these qualities painted by the Great Artist, and delighted to see her, delighting equally or more in letting her be seen. As he went about his gallery, of which she was the chiefest jewel, he showed her analytically to many over-eager eyes. There was, he said, something of La Gioconda in her; she smiled subtly and as if she held a secret in her heart. This secret of La Gioconda, said Halstead, giving judgment upon da Vinci's enigma with fluent words, was not a personal secret.

"Take my word for it," said Halstead, with a proper pomp, "this is the solution! Perhaps Pater saw it. Yes, but he was the victim of style, words ran off with him, and flung him into bottomless abysses of obscurity. La Gioconda's secret was not her secret, but the secret of Womankind, a woman's race secret; in her eyes are the Eleusinian mysteries of the eternal feminine. As you must observe if you follow me, La Gioconda did not know her own secret. In a word, it is not *her* smile, but the smile of womanhood

brooding tranquilly with her eyes upon the sea of fate. Now you may observe——"

If he could only catch Sophia sitting by her harpsichord (of course he had a harpsichord that was priceless) with her smile, and could show it to any critic (over-eager or over-critical), he expanded with serene joy.

"That's the very Gioconda look," said Halstead, pointing. His voice was subdued, triumphant.

It added immeasurably to her value.

"It is a thing that grows," said Halstead. "I've seen it come in my wife. I saw it grow. I could almost say when I first noticed it. Of course it comes after marriage. Before marriage a woman is a canvas; or, no, I should say an unfinished picture. Lover and husband finish!"

"Yes, lover and husband finish," said one hearer. "And then that smile comes, you say."

"The smile at destiny—the smile which is destiny."

If he showed her to the world and to dealers (in flesh, or paint, or both) he trusted her to his friends. To one in particular who displayed a notable admiration, toned, and tuned to the right artistic key, he was exceedingly kind.

"I am not like other men," said Halstead, with a regulated modesty. "I live for art in its glorious sense. I appreciate; in a sense, I *am* appreciation. I want to be surrounded by beautiful things, beautiful women, and even beautiful men. Now there is something exceedingly at-

tractive in Stephen Gardiner. Is there not, Sophia?"

La Gioconda said that there was. She played at a new instrument concealed in an ancient carved case, and smiled as she played.

"Oh yes," said Sophia.

"I love contrasts," cried the lover of art. "Stephen is as dark as night, as a lucid night, perhaps, and as I am so fair" (he looked in a Venetian mirror with fine complacency), "and as I am so fair it seemed natural to like him. Oh yes, natural; this is tone against tone. And to see him turn over music for Sophia does occasionally make me sigh that I myself do not paint. But then painters are necessarily narrow, are they not?"

So Stephen Gardiner turned over much music, and heard many songs, and sang them too, with passion. For he had a fine voice, which Halstead loved.

"Sing a duet," said Halstead. They sang many, and Halstead slept upon old brocade. Sophia was authentic, was real, was what he had bought her for. He trusted himself, and she was Art.

"By the way," said Halstead, "have I not an engagement to-night?"

"You have," said his wife, "and with me!"

She smiled perfectly.

"Oh, what an artist you are!" cried Halstead, with infinite pleasure.

Sophia lifted her eyebrows.

"Why, George?"

"The true artist is unconscious, my joy. You do not know how beautiful you are. Your every look beats the glorious efforts of—of—Oh! yes, and what is the engagement?"

"We are to go to see Taylor's new play."

Halstead's eyes gleamed.

"To be sure, to be sure. I knew there was something. I must see Taunton in this and the little Bright girl. She's a genius and has grace. And Taunton should be fine. And, of course, Webb has a part in it. They say, too, that Taylor has hit the mark at last. Well, well, it was time."

He went off to town on business that took him to dealers. There was not a dealer in London, or Paris, or Vienna, who did not know him. At any moment Halstead might start for the artistic ends of the earth to chase a gem or an ivory. He was of the breed who hunt or die forlorn in poverty. He declared that if he had been poor he would have become a policeman in South Kensington Museum.

"With my imagination I should have owned the finest collection in the world for several hours a day," he said.

He came home early, earlier than he was expected, and rushed into his wife's boudoir in wild excitement. She was preparing to dress, preparing for what Halstead owned was the most solemn function of a woman's life.

"Marriage happens once, they dress every day," he said.

"What is it, George?" asked Sophia, calmly.

"I can't go with you to-night, I positively can't!" cried Halstead. "At the club I heard casually from a man, who hadn't the least notion of the importance of what he was saying, that Clement Gregory had gone to utter smash!"

His eyes glowed.

"Think of his collection, and the things he has that I've hungered for! It seemed as if he'd never, never die. I've dreamed of auctions at his place. I must go and see him this very night. I wired to him at once, and got a reply. I'm to go there at eight. He knows what I want."

He almost waltzed round the room.

"There are gems that I'd give anything for. He has a collection of cameos that would make your mouth water. And snuff boxes! My dear, I'm quite giddy."

Sophia smiled and looked at him calmly.

"And about the theatre?"

"Oh! you must go," said Halstead. "Of course, I wouldn't interfere with that. I shan't be back till late. We shall be chaffering till after midnight. Get some one to go with you."

Sophia turned to the window.

"Whom shall I get?"

Halstead laughed.

"Oh! Stephen will go, if he has no engagement. I'll wire for you at once."

He ran downstairs and sent a telegram, and in an hour an answer came back: "I shall be only too delighted."

But before Gardiner came, Halstead had gone to Gregory's.

"He said eight, but I shall be early," said the connoisseur. Yet he stood waiting just to see Sophia come down to dinner. Her grace and beauty, and her colour, and her exquisite sense of fitness in dress gave him a delight hardly equalled by Gregory's cameos.

"You are the gem of my collection," said the husband. "There is nothing to equal you in the world. I kiss your hands, Gioconda mia!"

. . . . . .

He came back after midnight, and found the house in silence. Mrs Halstead was in bed, the butler told him. It was with infinite difficulty that the buyer of gems restrained himself from rushing upstairs and emptying his pockets on the rose coverlet of her bed. He sat in the dining-room and strewed the table with his purchases; the very butler had to admire them. Halstead was in heaven.

"But he made me pay," said Halstead. "You can't get uniques, Gordon, without paying."

"No, sir," said Gordon. "Is there anything else you require, sir?"

"Turn up some more lights, that's all," said Halstead. He remained gloating for an hour. To part with his new acquisitions even for the night was a pain. Though he locked up some ivories and three snuff boxes, he took the cameos and intaglios to his own room, and put them by his bed, so that he could see them when he woke.

He ran downstairs lightly in the morning, and went into the breakfast-room just after his wife. She was adorable, but a little pale, he said, and he burst into ecstasies about the things he had bought from Gregory.

"The poor chap almost cried. I was quite sorry for him," said Halstead. "But I must say he knows what things are worth. However, I should have had to pay more in the auction-room; that's pretty sure."

He ate and talked, and spread his gifts to himself upon the table.

"This is actually from the Cracherode collection," he cried, holding out an intaglio. "And this, see, from the old Hamilton lot. Authentic, of course. Even if I could be fooled over a gem of a picture, or you, my dear Gioconda, these were known before anyone ever took to forging and copying. Oh, it's great, it's great!"

He leant back and sighed with pleasure. And presently he remembered about the theatre.

"Oh! tell me about the play. Was it good?"

Sophia Halstead poured out some coffee and answered with a certain aloof deliberation:

"Very good, very good indeed."

"And it was well received? That's good, there's something in Taylor. I always said there was. There's not a keener judge in London of what's in a man. And are the new decorations decent?"

"Rose and gold and cream," said Sophia, 'the usual thing but quite decent."

"And what did Stephen say about the play? Was he in a critical mood, my dear?"

Sophia stooped to pick something from the ground.

"He—was delighted," said Sophia.

"Umph!" cried Halstead. "I must talk with him about it. There's the making of a critic about Stephen Gardiner, my dear. He admires *you*."

Sophia *was* a little pale, he said.

"I believe he does," said Sophia.

"Were there any calls at the end?" asked Halstead.

"The usual thing, the usual thing," Sophia answered; rather casually as it seemed to him.

"And Taylor?"

"I believe so, but we got out quickly at the end," said Sophia. "I do so hate the crush."

"Of course, of course," said Halstead, "so do I. There's something accursedly undignified in any crush. I never go without wishing I was a king. And what a queen you would make, Sophia! I might be a poor monarch, but as a queen you would have the world at your feet."

He fingered again at his gems. It was something to possess things which would be the source of envy in a thousand hearts.

"Why is it we like to cause envy?" asked Halstead. "And then I have you, my beautiful darling."

He kissed his hand to her, and at last reached out for the *Times*, which had been lying on the

floor where he had thrown it to make room for his new acquisitions. He opened the paper carelessly, and ran his eyes over its columns in search of something new, something which was in a sense unique, something for collectors of news to chatter over. And what he saw was that there had been a dreadful fire at the Royal Theatre the night before, and that many had been killed and many burnt.

La Gioconda was smiling as he read, smiling to herself secretly. But when she looked up at last she saw a very terrible white face glaring at her over the top of the shaking paper. And Halstead was trying to speak, with his hand at his throat.

From "Bianca's Caprice"

THE CROWD

THERE was visible excitement in the whole city of San Francisco, where men went in gangs and stranger spoke to stranger easily. For suspicion was lost when the populace melted into one, and the outside world was hid in passion. A cry or an argument called a crowd together; the knot dissolved and formed in a moment round another excited man gesticulating angrily. Few indeed kept their heads, and in this abandonment of self and relaxation of custom's strong control, people's hearts beat quicker; their features, their very walk changed marvellously. An odd and tremendous significance was in the sudden apparent likeness of unlike men; their very voices rang true to one high note; they went alert and quick, or stayed with flushed faces till some spoken thought sent them onward or dissolved them. Crowds formed and melted: they flowed and drew together like clouds in windless thunder weather on some high electric plateau. There was human electricity about, and strange incommunicable thoughts ran wordless; intent and purpose bred like contagion, and terrible chemic forces played among the hills that half girt the city. If but one drop of some needed acid fell in the cup of passion, an outburst was

assured—human chemistry that day meant some awful deed. Whose screamed word should give the command asked for by this leaderless army not yet become organic?

Only such as kept indoors, far aloof from the sound of tramping men, were masters of their own souls in that hour. The distant hum caught many who scorned the populace, and drawing them out by human magic, set them shouting. The houses emptied themselves of men when a crowd passed, as contained air bursts into a vacuum. Save the women, few whom strong duty did not hold, stayed indoors. Yet some kept their heads and watched from closed windows. And of these, two sat in a private room on the ground floor of the Palace Hotel and looked out into Market Street.

"I think one word does it now, Tatham," said Dr Lynn, as he lighted a new cigarette from an old one. He was a neat little man, with a cold, clear-cut American face of the legal rather than the medical type. "Shall I cry from the window, Tatham, you defender of notorious criminals?"

But big lawyer Tatham wiped his big face with a square yard of handkerchief and shook his head.

"You're wrong, man," he said uneasily; "they'll do nothing."

"You wish it!" cried Lynn.

"I don't care," said Tatham. "Let them do as they will."

Dr Lynn flicked some ash from his cigarette.

"Tatham, you are a dusty lawyer," he cried. "A good lawyer, no doubt, as our friend The Crowd knows, but you are a bookman. What is a crowd? You don't know. You know a jury, twelve men, and perhaps a few more at a political meeting, but they don't make up the thing a crowd is. Ah! outside here is judge, jury, and executioner. You'll hear another verdict, sentence, and execution to-night, Tatham; then you will know something as I know it."

The streets were black with the moving throng. Looking at them with half-closed eyes, the torrent seemed viscous; humanity died out of it.

"What's the betting," continued Lynn coldly, "that your friend Hale lives till midnight?"

Tatham frowned.

"He's no friend of mine."

"But what's the betting?"

"A thousand to one, Lynn."

"You mean that, Tatham? No! But I'll take level money now. Do you fear for Hale's lawyer too?"

Tatham frowned again but looked uneasy and stood a little further away from the window, which now had an almost irresistible attraction for him. And Lynn laughed sardonically.

"Wise man," he said. "But, if I had been you, I should have been in Sonoma County by this, grape-picking."

The black crowd in the streets now impeded the cable cars, which came to the Ferries full and went back empty. Kearney Street, Beech and

Pine fed the torrent; workers from grimy works on Spear and Stewart joined the flood. For it was now past four o'clock in the afternoon of the hot windy summer. Flying dust irritated ten thousand yelling throats; the movement of the distant human river was half hidden in rising clouds.

"A crowd, Tatham," said Lynn, "is not human. That's the key to it. It's not human, as we understand human individuality. It's not bestial, not reptilian. But it's all three—human, bestial, and reptilian. To say it is a human thing, is to call bricks or girders and fireproof floors a city. A crowd is a flood of life, a giant mass of deadly forces; it has no very clear foresight; it takes the present only; it has no conscience. A man in a crowd can commit crimes and come out without knowing he has done so. It's an organism, a piece of protoplasm, a creature not in the books. Drag one of its atoms out, knock him down and cool him, and see him come back slowly to humanity again. I've seen it, Tatham. The psychology of a crowd is the psychology of a pure instinctive. A madman may act as a crowd acts; he's gone down to the raging level of a mass. The hot average of an angry number is a devilish thing. But I'm not sorry for Hale, a murderous millionaire, saved by a bought jury and a bought judge."

He turned to Tatham.

"And by you, my old friend, Tatham, a most notable advocate."

The lawyer smiled feebly, but his hands were

very nervous; his lower lip kept moving; he walked the room jerkily.

"I did what I had to do, Lynn," he cried, "and as a lawyer it was nothing to me that he shot the boys. You talk as if criminals were not to be defended. Wait till conviction, Lynn. Now I'd have him hanged if I could. You knew the boys. I didn't. I tell you it was nothing to me that he shot them."

He walked up and down, trying to convince himself that he spoke the truth.

"Nothing to you, Tatham?" asked Lynn. "You mean as a lawyer; but it may mean much to you as a man."

The shriller voice of the crowd was more audible; it rose rhythmic like a sea, an advancing flood.

"Ay, I knew the boys," said Lynn, "and the sister that he treated so. But Myron Hale will die this night, unless the police have him out of the city. Go out through the crowd and tell them that. I know crowds—who knows them better? It's a terror here! I've heard that note before! At the time of the Commune! Listen!"

He sprang up and flung the window open.

"Look!" he cried, and Tatham looked from behind a curtain at the boiling flood of humanity, no longer human wholly. Both men at the window were flushed, but Lynn was only ruddy, while the veins on Tatham's forehead ridged themselves and he was purple. Lynn stood with his hands on the sill, as though he was ready to vault out.

"It calls, it calls!" cried he, almost joyfully.

"What calls?" asked Tatham, shuddering.

Lynn laughed strangely.

"Common Humanity—and The Crowd," said Lynn, catching Tatham by the wrist.

"Let me go, Lynn," cried the lawyer.

"No, no! Look at the great Court of Appeal bought decisions are upset by," cried the doctor. "By God! but this same Red Court will tear something in your country yet."

Tatham came a little closer to Lynn and to the window; the myriad voice of the crowd dragged him as a song drags a child; it *was* a song and had an odd rhythm which harmonized more with his heart beats; he was bolder unawares and feared the outside world less.

"Wise folk would split the crowd, divide it, hustle it into byways and cow it," cried Lynn. "They understand these things better in Europe. They thrust in a troop here, a wedged battalion there, or point a gun whose black throat alone splits the people. Even to stick in some clubbing policeman may be enough. Keep the broad streets empty, the big square red-lined with soldiers. Or blue-lined, if you prefer it. A crowd is a child in intellect; a giant in strength; its gods are Panic and Murder, but it laughs and plays with dolls. Or with corpses. Oh, but it's out to-day! Come out, Tatham!"

The lawyer was dragged to the window by himself not himself. He parted the curtains, and Lynn laughed to note now that the keen intellect

in Tatham's face was clouded, as it might have been by drink. But he was sober, though assuredly not himself. He stared at the surging crowd. "I know Hale was a beast," he cried suddenly.

His face was flushed; his hands clenched; his look was a look reflected; his features yielded to the plastic influence of the crowd, and, though he struggled, he himself was yielding.

"Oh, I did wrong to defend him!"

Lynn laughed aloud and took the lawyer by the wrist. He and Tatham were then strangely alike in their unlikeness. And outside, their peers flowed by them, under them; the sinking sun flamed splendid on ruddy faces moving west.

"If they see you——" jeered Lynn.

"Ah—what then?" asked Tatham.

"They might be satisfied with Hale's lawyer."

Tatham flinched a little, but went to the table and drank a finger of whisky.

"Not they; they like me——"

"And Hale?" asked Lynn. "You daren't show yourself. For half a cent I'd tell them."

For Lynn was not quite sober then.

"And if they see you?"

"If, if?" cried Tatham, never without courage, and now not himself; "they shall, they shall!"

"You dare not," jeered Lynn.

But he was wrong.

"I dare," said Tatham.

And as he leant out of the window with his big veiny hands flat on the sill, the crowd saw

him and stayed on a heap. The west-set faces turned.

"Oh, what a rose garden!" said Lynn.

"Hale's lawyer," cried the big Human Beast out of a thousand mouths. And they rose in black and red foam against the rail outside. None too soon Tatham cried out to them. His face was convulsed.

"Fellow citizens, I did wrong to defend this man. For he is a murderer. Kill him!"

"Come out!" cried the crowd. And with Tatham went Lynn, and there were no more individualities in the street. The crowd was one.

The drop needed to set the pent forces free was in the awful cup when Tatham spoke words, not his own but sent up to him by the crowd, which he deemed the result of some inner working of remorse. But the crowd took him and claimed him through all the unknown, unmapped channels that make the universal human mind one great sea in times of storm. He was swept to their head, unconscious of his separate self—one with them in purpose, in power, in ruthlessness and brutality.

Lynn kept near Tatham and for a while was partially his own man. He preserved his sane, separate mind and watched, but even as he bent his intellect to mark a phase or symptom of this strange disorder, his brain was invaded and set flaming by the intense fire of the crowd. An accident brought him back to himself for a time. A piece of thrown glass struck him and cut his

hand; the blood poured down. He wrapped the wound up and thanked the thrower gaily, recognizing mere chance. The near crowd laughed at this; they shrieked with laughter. What wit was in his rude pleasantry! What humour! Always delicate in language, Lynn used the vilest words now and was amazed. And he flowed on with the rest, joyous for a moment as a dark river in sunshine before it plunges anew into its sombre cañon. Then, as the plunge was made into the depths, the voice arose, a huge massed choric anthem of revenge. It took a deeper note soon, and was a hoarse, low cry, animal-like and most horrible.

They struck up against dark walls and flowed back in eddies; streets split them, but they joined again like quicksilver divided; the smaller parts doubted but for a moment, and then ran after one instinctive leader. One poor wretch was trodden down and left crying lamentably, for pity was not in them. What was one atom of the huge organic mass? As well might some great warrior trouble about a faint abrasion of the skin that tore but a thousand cells from his strong body.

Now the sun was setting; it flamed on the last high peaks of buildings, on ruddy clouds, bloodlike over the long bay, on Mount Tamalpais and Mount Diablo when the great human storm burst round the gaol, demanding the body of Myron Hale. All the main streets were empty, the city was half deserted. Stragglers ran eagerly

towards the roar; like sheep divided from the flock, they followed the voice of vengeance.

As night fell the roar about the sullen walls was inarticulate but most intelligible. Its volume sapped courage and broke down resolution. White faces behind the walls grew whiter; each prisoner for violent crimes knew the summons, and now at last feared bitter judgment from an unbought judge.

It had run through the mob like fire through flax, that Tatham, the best-known lawyer in the city, the repentant defender of a villain, was among them; they took him out from them and set him on a cart and bade him speak to the men of the gaol. He was like a drunken man now, and the sweat ran down him; his coat was torn, and he went bareheaded. The anger of the mob came through him as pumped water through a branch pipe, but he was nothing above their intellectual level. They howled, and he spoke a straight word without eloquence, for a mob's true spokesman is their equal in mind, their superior in nothing.

" Give us Myron Hale or we will have Governor Houston himself," cried Tatham. For the Governor of the State was Hale's cousin.

The chief gaoler looked out and saw Tatham, and fell back thunderstruck. He gurgled and tried to speak, but was a moment late, and the roar that confirmed Tatham overwhelmed him.

" It's the whole city," he shouted to his men.

" Ay, and the whole State," cried one of them. " I knew it, I knew it. Throw 'em the keys."

And intuition leapt from the stunned man above to the crowd that beat him down.

"The keys, the keys!" cried the mob.

"Or we'll have the doors down," said Tatham.

"No," cried the gaoler; but looking out he saw a thousand, thousand dreadful eyes, a thousand, thousand reaching arms, a huge, flat, undulating polyp brandishing suckers. The eyes, the movement, the boom of speech caught him, held him, and moved his set mind. He struggled with himself, his bitten lip ran blood, law and training and long-fulfilled duty dragged him back, but on the other side the people themselves, the ancient real fount of law and order and power, resuming their lost authority in that black day, took him and cut him adrift from duty and convention. They were Law, they were Kings, and Authority armed. And the heat of their rage melted him too. He knew they were right.

Lifting the keys, he flung them.

"Take him!" he cried. And his pallid subordinates called out the number of the murderer's cell.

. . . . . .

It was late that night before Lynn got back to his hotel, for after the dreadful killing of Hale under the red heels of the mob, he was swept back to the Ferries, and finding it impossible to force his way home, he boarded a Saucelito boat and went across the bay to think.

It mattered nothing that the boat hummed of

the day's deeds, but those upon its decks were not the crowd, not a crowd, not even a portion of the organic whole which had been the avenger of evaded law. Lynn, who had lost his head for one hideous moment outside the prison when he saw Hale, was now himself again, and as the hot land breeze swept down the long curve, even from Suisun, it seemed icy to him after that short, mad fever of a sunken individuality.

" And what of Tatham? " he asked himself.

And Tatham's name was in all men's lips, even in the boat. Some praised and some blamed, but the majority slowly grew for him, and then the minority became less vocal.

" It shows what a lawyer thinks of law when he gets real mad," said one.

" There's a deal too much law and too little justice," cried another.

" Bully for Tatham! Run him for governor! " cried a third.

And though a laugh ran through the people, there was no such absurdity in the suggestion as there might have been in some countries.

And when Lynn got back after a cool walk by the sheltered shore of Saucelito, he found San Francisco of the same mind. The hotel's vestibule was a throng of excited men. Argument was over there, and the current ran strong for Tatham. Even among the richer folk, the verdict, sentence, and execution of the people were approved. They recounted Hale's misdeeds. There are two great characteristics of the American people—

Lawlessness and Puritanism: here they got their chance together.

"Where's Tatham?" they asked.

And seeing Lynn, they asked him what he was ready to ask them. He went out hunting for him, and instinct led him right.

"He'll be in the worst place he knows," said Lynn. "On the reaction and awakening, he'll be sick and mad and remorseful. All this will feel like a mad debauch. He'll be ashamed."

So Lynn went down the Barbary Coast, and in the tenth den that he risked his head in, he found Tatham the mournful object of mixed admiration and derision by a crowd of the coast ruffians and Telegraph Hill toughs.

He was a mass of dirt, and his coat was torn to tatters. Head-gear he had none, and his high, bald forehead was dishonoured by a dab of soot put there as a joke by one of the boys. It was obvious, by the way he swayed in his chair, that he was far advanced in drink. He was speaking when Lynn slipped through the swing-door.

"Well, boys, and so and so and *so*, we took him out, and he howled. But we did right. That's what I say. And I did wrong when I ever got up on my hind legs before old Jennings to say a word for him. For I knew Jennings had that sentence ready! And I won't say he winked at me. But if he had, why, it wouldn't have surprised me. So we stamped on Hale. And oh! boys, I'm a ruined man, and I'll have another

whisky, for I'm ruined. And oh! damn Hale! damn him! I say——"

He caught sight of Lynn, and the doctor's face at once sobered and angered him.

"Come out!" said Lynn.

"I'll never," cried Tatham, blubbering. "How can I show my face?"

"Oh! the soot will come off, sir," said the bar-tender.

"Ay, any soot," said Lynn.

But Tatham laid his big head on the table and sobbed, and the boys laughed and hammered on the floor.

"They're talking of Tatham for governor in the city," said Lynn, with half a sneer.

Tatham raised his mottled and besmeared face from the sticky rings made by seidels of lager.

"What's that?"

But the toughs caught it and jumped up, cheering.

"Tatham for governor! Hurrah! Come, governor, set up the drinks."

He filled the crowd up and got outside with Lynn. When the air took him he staggered, but Lynn whipped his mind and got him sober.

"Do you want to smash the lot that's against you?" he asked.

"Well, now, don't we both?" asked Tatham, feebly.

"Then get up, you fool! This is your chance. Take a bath; get these rags off, and we'll go to the Palace Hotel."

He got Tatham to his rooms, made him wallow in cold water, and played the valet to him.

"I was mad," said the lawyer, fingering a collar for his fat neck.

"No," said Lynn, "you were one of the crowd, doing justice. Listen! listen!"

With raised hand he pointed to the window. They heard the newsboy calling, "Attack on the Gaol!" "Mob led by Lawyer Tatham!" "Killing of Myron Hale, the Murderer!"

Tatham had been rising plumply like a filling balloon, but this pricked him. He dropped into a chair, with one side of his collar unfastened. Lynn came and stood over him.

"You did not do it. The crowd did it. And now the crowd's dissolved. There are only mere people outside, not a big thing. But you mark me; even as the crowd applauded, so will its atoms. For when the people and the mob agree, it's a case of right and natural justice, Tatham. You'll be the most popular man in the state."

Tatham nodded doubtfully.

"The most popular man in the state! Now, do you really think so?" he asked.

From "The Keeper of the Waters"

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

It was long past sundown when I camped on the roadside in the Rogue River Valley, but the sky was full of the afterglow, and the Siskyou Range was gleaming. Other tramps had used the nearer wood, but I scraped up enough to light a fire and boil some water for tea. I had a little mutton and some bread to eat, and I gulped it down miserably. What was I doing in such a place? And what was my place in the universe? I yearned terribly for some one to speak to; even a common tramp of the usual order would have helped me in my mood that night.

But as the afterglow faded and the stars arose from the east, and the crests of the Siskyous became mere sharp mountain forms against the sky, the silence was oppressive. It was warm and very still, and the subdued hum of the unseen insect world accentuated the depth of silence in the human earth. My nerves were on edge: the howl of a chained dog on a distant farm made me start from a waking dream. I threw more wood on my fire, and, unrolling my blankets, I lay down.

Perhaps I had been asleep no more than a few minutes, when I awoke suddenly, finding that I had turned over with my back to the blazing logs. But I was conscious even then that I was not

alone, and with the instinct of suspicion alight in me, I slid my hand to the butt of my pistol and rolled over as though still asleep. I saw a man sitting on the opposite side of my fire with his hands locked round his knees. He was staring into the embers with a far-off look in his gleaming eyes. No more utterly melancholy face had ever fronted mine. I watched for more than a minute before he came conscious that I was awake.

"I hope I haven't disturbed you, partner," he said, apologetically. "But it was cold, and I hadn't any matches, and I'm getting old—getting old."

He murmured the last words almost to himself.

"That's all right, old son," I answered. "You're welcome."

"I was going to borrow a lighted stick and make a fire for myself. I've scraped up some wood just yonder."

"Bring it here then," said I. "One big fire is better than two small ones."

And the old chap rose. He was long and thin and haggard, with the bowed shoulders of ancient and continued toil; he walked as though greatly fatigued. He came back in a minute with his arms full of sticks, and, putting some of them on the embers, he sat down again. I was wide awake now and sat up.

"Don't——" he began. But I stopped him.

"My tongue's rusty. I want to talk. You struck a bad streak of luck some time ago, old man, eh?"

"I did, partner. I'm an accursed man."

Ah! then he was mad. But that's not an odd thing in the United States Standing Army of Tramps, not odd at all. Is it strange that toil and want and misery should drive some of those crazy who have not the strength to meet the bitter newer order of civilization; who are crushed by competition and the good law that yields Beelzebub his tribute of laggards and weaklings?

I heated up the tea again. He drank the warm infusion of this commercial herb, which knew not Ceylon or China, with great eagerness, and thanked me almost humbly. I felt encouraged, for I was not so low down; and suppressing my anxiety as to the morrow, I kindly bestowed upon him the remains of a sheep-bone and a crust. There are many orders among Outcasts.

"You are a good sort," he told me. I denied it savagely.

"I'm nothing of the kind, old man. Don't give me any such slush, or you can shift your camp. Good! why, I'd like to cut the throats of some men."

He shrank down as though I had struck him.

"Don't," he said. "I felt that way myself once. But I repent."

"Did you do it?"

"Do what, partner?"

"Cut anyone's throat?"

He shook his head and smiled wanly.

"I think I did worse, partner. May I tell you? I like to tell it sometimes."

"Wait till I fill my pipe," I answered. "Have you one?"

He produced a clay and lighted it.

"But perhaps you want to sleep?"

I shook my head.

"Fire away, sonny!"

But at first he could not talk. He began whittling a stick, and muttered to himself. Perhaps he imagined that he was speaking aloud, for when I did catch what he was saying he was in the middle of a sentence.

"And so I took it over. Paid part, and took it over with the mortgage on it. And I worked hard. It wasn't much of a place then, but there was the water to irrigate it. I planted more oranges, and made a vineyard myself. I did it all—all—and God knows how I slaved and worked on it. All the men about the country said I was a hard, hard man. But I don't think I was. Perhaps I made others work, but didn't I work myself? Hadn't I worked in Iowa for ten dollars a month, and in Oregon for twenty, all those years before I went down south to San Diego and put my money into this fruit ranch? Of course I had. Oh! but not so hard as I worked there, when I worked for a place to bring my wife and child to from the East. Because I wanted them bad, and she hadn't been used to rough it, for she was daughter to a locomotive engineer in Minnesota; and her mother

had a farm, the only one for miles without a mortgage on it. I've read of folks saying how lucky farmers in the United States are because they mostly don't pay rent. No, but they pay interest. As I know—as I know.

" But as I was telling. I worked for five years on my ranch, and then things was in shape. I seed the trees grow that I'd planted, and my heart was in it all. And every orange and every pear or grape was part of me. They was all my children. And perhaps, partner, you never owned no land. But even so you've travelled, and the big desire has come over you to settle down and put your feet deep in a bit of God's broad good earth, saying, ' This is my little share, given me to make fruitful.' For a man has, so to speak, and I've thought it out often, two wives, a woman and a bit of the earth. But when a man takes a hull county or half a state, it ain't according to my morality. It seems wicked. For there's fine men with none. And their strength is nought. They have no children out of the earth."

He dropped his pipe and stood up, and now he seemed to forget me, speaking to the air and the broad lands of that beautiful valley and the everlasting hills.

" But when five years was past and done, I had the house in shape and the trees were full of fruit and the young orchards promisin'. And then I sent for Carrie and the child. So I had my good wife and the baby as was no baby now, but

a growing girl like a fine young tree. For them I worked harder, and I was always level, if not more. Sometimes it was a real bit more, but of course the interest of the mortgage was heavy. And may the inventors thereof be accursed, even as I am.

"For though a man without leeches sucking his blood may abide a bad season accordin' to his strength, and wait for the good return which is God's gift to them as can endure His chastisement, it is not so when he works one hour for himself and ten for a sucking spider in a web of law in a city office. And a bad season came and I was behind my bond with the spider, and on the added interest he took ten more per cent. To each dollar added to his account he added more, till no good season could straighten me out again, and every bright day was heavy with clouds for me, and my best hope was dried up like a tree dying with the scale.

"And now, after five more years, the time came when my wife's very keep, for she wasn't as strong as some, and the two girls, for there was another, seemed too much. I thought perhaps if she went back East again I could hire a man or a boy and get straight again. And I sent her back with money as I borrowed—one hundred dollars only. But they cost me ten each year.

"And I lived, God knows how, for I don't, because the long days was a bad dream, I felt that lonely. I was sorry at times that I'd ever come on land that the law called my own. But I

hankered after it, and the smell of it. And time and time again I dreamed it was all my own and free of interest, and I woke up crying tears of joy in a joyless house that wasn't mine. And the trees that seemed to know me were my children, and now when I walk I see the sun in the orange grove and smell the smell of the white blossoms and my heart is sick with desire. But there aren't any there now.

" Perhaps there might have been if it hadn't been that the old lawyer as lent the young lawyer money to lend to me on the land I'd made came up to take a look at the land as was mostly his. And that's why I say I wanted once to cut a man's throat. For when I showed him round and was civil to him and spoke him fair, I could have caught him by his fat throat and got him down and choked him. For he'd never really worked and he was fat and soft, with a heavy jowl, and his father had been a railroad man with lots of money. And this man he says to me, but yet more to himself, ' If so be there was a good house built it would be a lovely place.' And then he took a drink of wine and rode away in his buggy, going soft and comfortable as I went back mad to prune vines and scrape off scale, and see to things just as if I was a hired man, with all the little profits leaking out and coming up in a spring in a town office, with a lot of uncivil boys in it learning the devil's work.

" That night, as I lay in bed, I knowed as well as if I'd heard him say it, that if I was a dollar

behind I'd be squeezed out even before the clause, that gave 'em power to foreclose unless the whole principal was paid, came in force. For they that drew the mortgage knew how to draw it, and I signed it like an innocent. For the money I wanted was honey on a bear-trap, and they had me tight.

"And of course, as is the nature of things once in so many years, there came a bad season, frost and a big wind, that nipped me and drove me out like chaff. And I walked among my planted trees and on the earth I'd turned over for years to give it the sun and air, and I was mad. For I heard the trees speak, and the wind in the orange grove was like a voice. And I went in and gave the hired man his money and told him to go quick. And he ran, for he was afraid, and said things of me in the town. But I was glad the wife and children were away. Because just then I read in an eastern paper how a ruined man had killed his own wife and children. And I knew well how it happened.

"For I feared to go for my letters, because I was behind and couldn't get up with these spiders. And so the notice of foreclosure came. And that day I neither worked nor ate, but I sat in the house thinking of the dead man in New York that had killed his own. I wondered how it was in the dark workings of things that such was allowed, and here was all my years of sober, heavy work going over to a man who sat and cried out kindly that he would help them that

wanted it and not be hard. And he gave money to churches and was praised in the San Diego paper, that he owned shares in, till his name was spoken of in San Francisco, and some said he should be a senator.

"And the day passed and it was noon, and then I went out and saw the sun set behind the orange-trees that I had seen grow, and it was very beautiful. But my heart was dried up; I only felt like a man accursed and a devil and a sinner not to be forgiven. And I took my axe and sharpened it till I could shave a big slice of horn off'n the palm of my hand just as the sun was like blood on the foot hills east of me. And God's light went wholly out of me. I took the axe into my orange grove and I destroyed all the trees. Some I cut down and some I barked, and the young olives I destroyed, and what I could of the vineyard. For I worked all night by the light of the moon till the dawn came, but even then I was not tired, no, nor did I feel I had done ought to tire me. And when the dawn came up, I fired my house and the stable I had built, and I took my horse out which I had trained and broken, but was no longer mine. And I shot it there, yes, I shot it, and I watched its blood flow on the heavy dust, and I did not care one bit, nor was I sorry.

"Then I put on my hat and walked up into the hills, for fear folks should come. For folks who had not harmed me I did not want to harm, though I did not love them, any more than I

loved my wife and my girls in the East. And I knew if I met a man, and had the axe in my hand, I should kill him.

"And I walked for three days, so far as I know, without food, and when I came to myself I was far away. Then I knew I had done a most evil thing, a thing hated by God. For I saw what a small thing I was, and I knew that the work of a man was for men and not for himself, and I knew that no man can work for himself. I saw that the lawyer could not have kept what he took. He too must have died, but still my beautiful trees would have been fruitful. And I had killed them, and by doing that I had destroyed a great part of myself. I bowed my head in the dust and a great anguish came over me.

"For if my orchards and my vineyards and my groves had still been fruitful, I could have said to myself, 'You have worked and have been rewarded, if not as you desired.' But now my life was barren and my labour wasted, and no greater anguish can smite any man. All the years had gone down beyond the sun, and in the night of my old age I have no consolation, and I can work no more. For ever and ever as I walk and tramp I see the desolation I caused, and if I could only undo this I would die happy. But it cannot be done. It cannot be done. And I am an old man, an old, old man. I want to go home."

His voice trailed off into a whisper, and he sat down and hugged his knees, staring into my dying fire.

And for a long time I did not speak. He was a very strange old man. But I gave him more tobacco and he thanked me gently. I asked him if his wife was yet alive.

But he said he did not know.

From "The Keeper of the Waters"

WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

Fife Education Committee
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